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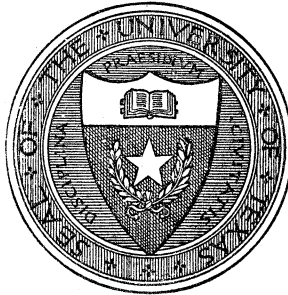
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STUDIES IN ENGLISH NO. 2

*A Study in Shirley's Comedies
of London Life*

BY

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PREFACE

The present study in Shirley's comedies of London life originally formed the introduction to a complete edition of the play entitled *The Ball*, a work presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The entire work was to have appeared shortly as a *Bulletin* of the University of Texas; and was already in press, when a new edition of *The Ball* made its appearance in a collection of Chapman's comedies* lately edited by Professor Parrott of Princeton University. In view of a recent and satisfactory edition of *The Ball*, it hardly seemed advisable to duplicate work on so unimportant a play, and for this reason the text and accompanying notes of the present writer's edition have been suppressed, and the introductory matter allowed to issue in what must necessarily seem a fragmentary form. It is to be hoped that what is here printed may not seem superfluous. Professor Parrott and I have covered much the same ground in discussing the authorship of the play and have arrived at the same conclusions; my study has been made, however, from the point of view of Shirley rather than from that of Chapman, which is Professor Parrott's line of approach.

The unusual form of the present study, due as above noted to a change of purpose in the course of printing, deserves some brief comment. A few facts are, therefore, given here, in explanation of what may seem a partial and ununified treatment of Shirley and his play *The Ball*.

James Shirley is well known to special students of the Elizabethan drama, and with the increasing study of the literature of his time has become familiar to many general readers. With Massinger he shares the reputation of having left the longest and most creditable list of plays written by one man during the reign of the first Charles. Among these plays is *The Ball*, a light comedy in defense of a fashionable fad, written by Shirley at a time when he was more familiar with London's exclusive social circles

**The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Comedies*, ed. by T. M. Parrott, London, 1914.

than was any other dramatist then writing for the public stage. Although *The Ball* has the interest of an authentic picture of contemporary manners, it has not a high intrinsic value, nor is it one of Shirley's best plays. It is mainly interesting to the lover of our old drama from the fact that on the title-page of the first edition Shirley's name is linked with that of George Chapman. The question of the authorship of *The Ball* is given added importance by the further fact that the two dramatists are again joined as collaborators on the title-page of *Chabot, Admiral of France*, a tragedy quite as much in the ponderous style of Chapman as *The Ball* is in the lighter vein of Shirley's comedy of manners. In 1632, when *The Ball* was first presented, Chapman, a noble old poet of Elizabeth's day long past his active career, had come to comparative obscurity. Shirley, on the other hand, was a rising young playwright just brightening into full professional fame. The suggestion of collaboration between these two men at once stimulates the curiosity of a student of the Elizabethan drama, and must form an important problem in any consideration of *The Ball* or the tragedy of *Chabot*.

In investigating the facts concerning the comedy entitled *The Ball* preparatory to an edition of the play, I soon reached the conclusion that the main point upon which any new light could be shed was that of the authorship of the play, although there was always a tentative hope that in the course of general reading some corroborative account of the so-called "ball" might be discovered. As the play was founded upon a bit of contemporary social scandal, the question of sources proved negligible; and the dates of composition and publication are seemingly indisputable. The problem of the text is greatly simplified by the fact that there is only one original edition. To these matters, then, I have only given incidental treatment in the following monograph; and have endeavored to exclude all matter that does not in some way contribute to a settlement of the authorship, with the exception of a few pages of conjecture as to the nature of the amusement called the "ball."

As it now stands, my work upon Shirley and the play of *The Ball* is composed of three parts: a section on Shirley as a poet and playwright, with a special inquiry into his comedies on London life; a section on Chapman's practice in comedy; and a section devoted almost exclusively to a discussion of the authorship of the

play. Any settlement of the question of the collaboration of Shirley and Chapman must depend upon internal evidence. For this reason I have placed the results of my study of the two poets before the argument in regard to their collaboration in *The Ball*. The section on Shirley is longer and more comprehensive than that of Chapman. My reason for this is twofold: in the first place, Shirley is according to my view sole author of *The Ball*, and would thus warrant ampler treatment; in the second place, his contemporary and historical importance seemed to require a lengthened discussion of his work and talents. Shirley is not so favorably known as he should be. In nearly every treatment of the Caroline period, Massinger and Ford are mentioned as the representative dramatists. My study has led me to believe that, while Massinger may equal Shirley as a dramatic craftsman, he does not rank with him as a poet; and that Ford, while excelling Shirley at times in tragic power and lyrical beauty, falls short of him in comprehensive practice; and that neither Massinger nor Ford has a better claim than Shirley to be ranked as the representative dramatist of the time.

In the preparation of this slight monograph and the vicissitudes incident to its publication, I am deeply indebted to the helpful criticism and the patient kindness of Professor Felix E. Schelling of the University of Pennsylvania. In the work of getting it through the press, it would be hard for me to express what I owe to my friends Professor Killis Campbell and Mr. R. W. Fowler of the University of Texas.

H. T. P.

June, 1914.

SHIRLEY AS A POET AND PLAYWRIGHT

Since Anthony à Wood gathered together the few surviving facts of Shirley's life, little has been discovered to add to his meagre account.¹ A diligent search of contemporary documents and a careful culling of the dedications and prologues of his plays have yielded nothing that would give more than a deeper color of truth to what was first brought together by the author of *Athenae Oxonienses*. But we know Shirley's story in its main and important points. We know that he rose rapidly from an obscure position as master of a small school at St. Albans to a conspicuous place as a London playwright, and that chance having brushed away his nearest competitors, he succeeded finally to the premier-ship of his profession. He took his place at the head of the important company of the King's men about 1640. He was then in the very prime of his manhood, and his art had been chastened and developed by a long and prolific practice. A bright future seemed to lie before him, but in less than two years the theaters were closed by order of a Puritan parliament. In the case of Shirley, however, we are not troubled by the regret that we feel in the case of some other poets of unfulfilled renown. It is clear to a student of his work that, variously and genuinely gifted as Shirley was, he had brought his art to full development in the plays that he has bequeathed to us. And any speculation as to what he might have accomplished in his maturer years is finally closed in retrospect by the fact that the end of a great age was at hand, and the birth of a new in all the toils and calamities of civil strife had put a sudden end to the traditions of the past and closed forever the playhouses of the Elizabethan dramatists.

Shirley moved among his contemporaries so modestly and quietly that he failed in any peculiar manner to impress himself upon his age. He had no quarrel with the life of his times nor with the methods of his art. He accepted both as he found them, and for fifteen years worked with eminent success and perfect good temper among his fellow dramatists. He may have failed to obtrude a peculiar point of view or a dominant personality upon his time,

¹*Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Bliss, III, pp. 737-44.

but his contemporaries were none the less aware of the qualities upon which his fame, as justified by later criticism, rests. Massinger, Ford, Randolph, and May wrote in praise of his gentle muse, and found it to his commendation that in an age that ran to "forced expressions" and "rack'd phrase" his Helicon ran smooth. In all the commendatory poems written for his various plays, the leading thought is a recognition of the fact that Shirley relied for his success upon the older methods, and refused to cater to popular approval by the exaggerated and decadent art of many of his lesser contemporaries. The pit delighted in the obscenities of Brome and Killigrew, and the gallants of the time, as Shirley himself has remarked, censured plays that were not "bawdy."¹ But Shirley could win a public without practicing such arts. To the fashionable audience at the Cockpit he gave

"No Babel compositions, to amaze
The tortur'd reader, no believ'd defence
To strengthen the bold atheist's insolence,
No obscene syllable, that may compel
A blush from a chaste maid; but all so well
Express'd and order'd, as wise men must say,
It is a grateful poem, a good play."²

His contemporaries praised his discreet though fully adequate style; the good Master of the Revels noted in his office-book "for a patterne to other poets" "the beneficial and cleanly way of poetry" of Mr. Shirley; and to him was accorded at last the place at the head of the King's Company to which the best playwrights of his time aspired. Such in brief was the contemporary estimate of Shirley. With the closing of the theatres in 1642, he returned to his old profession of teaching.³ When the drama was revived at the Restoration, the leadership among playwrights passed unfortunately to the younger and inferior poet, Davenant.

Shirley lived on several years into the Restoration period, and continued to work, though not in the drama. But it must not be

¹Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, IV, p. 12.

²*Ibid.*, I, p. lxxix; poem by Massinger on *The Grateful Servant*.

³Mr. Gosse suggests that after the disaster at Marston Moor, Shirley retired to France with the Duke of Newcastle. *Best Plays of Shirley*, Mermaid Ser., p. xxvi.

inferred that he was immediately forgotten in his old capacity. Pepys records having seen *The Traitor* in 1660, and from his *Diary* we learn that he saw no less than nineteen performances of eight different plays by Shirley between that date and 1669.¹ Langbaine, writing as late as 1691, mentions having seen four of Shirley's plays within his remembrance.² These are all included in the list of those seen by Pepys. But besides these we know that *The Young Admiral*,³ *The Brothers*,⁴ *The Witty Fair One*, *The Example*, and *The Opportunity*⁵ were acted sometimes between 1663 and 1682. Malone complains that "such was the lamentable taste of those times that the plays of Fletcher, Jonson and Shirley were much oftener exhibited than those of our author [Shakespeare]."⁶ Not only was there a continued interest in Shirley's plays on the part of the public, but the early writers on English poetry echoed to some extent the estimate of Shirley held by his contemporaries. Edward Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), has acknowledged Shirley's talents in a statement that he was "little inferior to Fletcher himself." Winstanley (1687) and Langbaine (1691), while following Phillips more or less perfunctorily, must not be deprived of all originality in their critical judgments. The latter is especially warm, and, let it be said, very just in his short account of Shirley's merits as a poet and dramatist. He says of him that he was "a gentleman" and "one of such incomparable parts, that he was the chief of the second-rate poets" and "in all his writings shews a modesty unusual, seldom found in our age."⁷ It would be only fair to the poet and his critic to think that Dryden knew little about Shirley when in *Mac Flecknoe* he loosely joined him with Heywood as a type of Shadwell, the "last great prophet of tautology."⁸ This criticism coming from Dryden could not but have affected the public mind,

¹*Diary*, ed. Wheatley. The plays were *The Traitor*; *The Changes*; *The Court Secret*; *The Grateful Servant*; *Hyde Park*; *The Cardinal*; *Love's Cruelty*; *Love Tricks*.

²*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, Oxford, 1691, p. 475.

³Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. Bray, p. 290.

⁴Malone by Boswell, III, p. 276.

⁵Genest, *Account of the English Stage*, I, pp. 79, 339, 340.

⁶Malone by Boswell, III, p. 273.

⁷*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, pp. 474-475.

⁸*Works*, Scott-Saintsbury edition, X, p. 441.

and it is evident that after 1682 Shirley was rarely, if ever, seen upon the stage again. Oldham, writing soon after the publication of *Mac Flecknoe*, mentions his works as "moulding" with Sylvester's in Duck Lane shops.¹ That Dryden's unjust condemnation was not without its effects is further evident from Gildon, who in 1698 accuses Langbaine of giving no small praise to "most of the indifferent Poets, so that shou'd a Stranger to our Poets read him, they wou'd make an odd Collection of our English Writers, for they would be sure to take Heywood, Shirley, etc., and leave Dryden," etc.² But contemptuous mention soon ran to abuse, and in another satirist of the time, one Robert Gould, whom Genest accused of having stolen one of his plays from Shirley,³ we learn of the poet as

"The scandal of the ancient stage,
Shirley, the very D'Urfey of his age."⁴

Pope, strangely enough, passed Shirley by without comment; and from this time on to the appearance of Dr. Farmer's *Essay*, 1767, little is heard of Shirley beyond the fact that several of his plays were reprinted at various times.⁵ To the neglected poet Farmer traces an idea that Milton had used, and in passing pays the old dramatist the compliment of an "imagination sometimes fine to an extraordinary degree."⁶ This praise undoubtedly did much to call attention to a man who in his lifetime had been too modest to push his own claims. Even without the aid of Farmer it would have been impossible for Shirley to escape the sympathetic scrutiny of Charles Lamb, and it is due to this critic that in the early part of the nineteenth century Shirley came into his own again.⁷ Sir Walter Scott gave him a just valuation about the same time, and also remarked that a complete set of his works

¹See Shirley, James, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

²*Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets*, p. 131.

³*Account of the English Stage*, II, pp.73-74.

⁴See Shirley, James, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁵Giles Jacobs, *Poetical Register*, London, 1723, I, pp. 237-42, gives a list of Shirley's plays, and mildly dissents from Gildon's complaint against Langbaine.

⁶*Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*, p. 38.

⁷*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, pp. 387-408.

was much esteemed by collectors.¹ Genest, writing about 1830, declared that "nothing is so much wanted in the dramatic line as an edition of Shirley's plays—an edition was promised to the public in 1815, or perhaps sooner—the promise was repeated again and again—sometimes in the shape of a formal advertisement."² The edition promised was by Gifford, who for some reason was unable to finish the task, dying in 1826. As it was generally known that he was at work upon this venture, other editors were deterred from issuing any of Shirley's plays. Otherwise we should undoubtedly have had an edition fifteen years earlier. As it was, Dyce finally brought the work begun by Gifford to completion in the authoritative edition of 1833.

Upon the issuance of the Gifford-Dyce edition in 1833, there appeared in the *Quarterly Review*³ an admirable anonymous essay on Shirley, to the soundness and sympathy of which little has been added since. In more recent times Swinburne has given us a very competent essay, with the critical results of which it would be hard to disagree in any important detail.⁴ But his criticism has the doubtful value of being too equitable. In his desire to do perfect justice to Shirley's weak points, he has neutralized to a great extent his praise of his merits, and leaves us with the feeling that Shirley's genius was merely "mild and apathetic." This does not seem critically fair. Yet even so recent and excellent a critic as Mr. Courthope has huddled the poet away in a few words as falling in the company of such men as Brome, Cartwright, and Randolph.⁵ Dr. Ward fully appreciates the merits of Shirley in his *History of English Dramatic Literature*; but the chronological method which Dr. Ward has adopted in this work makes a comparative estimate of Shirley difficult for the reader to form. It is to a more recent work on the Elizabethan drama that we must turn for an adequate comparative treatment of our author. Professor Schelling has put Shirley in his proper place

¹Dryden, *Works*, Scott-Saintsbury edition, X, p. 442. This edition of Dryden appeared first in 1808, the same year as Lamb's specimens.

²*Account of the English Stage*, IX, p. 542.

³Vol. 49, 1833, p. 1. The *Quarterly* gives the date of publication as 1832.

⁴*Fortnightly Review*, XLVII (n. s.), p. 461.

⁵A *History of English Poetry*, IV, p. 384.

when he calls the reign of Charles I "above all the period of Shirley."¹ The reason for Shirley's failure genuinely to impress either his time or the times to come, Professor Schelling says, is not far to seek. "Shirley, coming at the end of a great drama, was eclectic in the practice of his art. He was neither frankly a disciple like Massinger nor daringly an innovator like Ford." Critical estimate of Shirley from his own day to our own has not neglected the main traits of his genius: his modesty, his competency, and the sweet charm of his poetic fancy; but there has been some injustice done him in an emphasis of his negative merits, and a failure to define his relative contemporary standing. However, with this brief summary of his contemporary and posthumous fame before us, we may turn with possibly greater sureness to a fresh examination of his work and merits.

In any estimate of Shirley's genius, the conditions of the times in which he wrote can not be too clearly kept in mind. With the coming of James to the throne of England there is evident, even to the superficial student of the period, a change in atmosphere and literary aim. The whole substance and tone of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, for instance, is different from that of earlier masters like Dekker, Jonson, and Shakespeare. The Jacobean drama deserted the broader interests of national life and character for the narrower function of amusing a courtly circle. In passing from the patronage of the public to that of the court, the drama lost in vitality and human significance. For the genuine study of human personality in the earlier plays, artists like Beaumont and Fletcher substituted the clever plotting of artificial romantic story; instead of the copious richness and careless strength of the great Elizabethans, the Jacobean playwrights had nothing better to offer than a more finished art; the healthy directness and buoyancy of the earlier drama declined, and the tone of Jacobean plays is frequently suggestive of the profligacy and moral taint of the rich and leisured class. There is no better example of the desertion of a national experience in thought and life than that found in the poetry of the reigns of James and Charles. Instead of great national poets, the playwrights and song writers of the Jacobean period became literary purveyors to

¹*Elizabethan Drama*, II, p. 427.

the upper classes, or, in the case of the Cavalier lyrists, gentlemen dabbling in poetry as an elegant pastime. The poetry of the first quarter of the seventeenth century is frequently delicate and refined, and always literary; but it has lost greatly in closeness to life, in richness and power. Beaumont and Fletcher are the first poets after Shakespeare to show this decline in poetic greatness in the drama. With all their gain in technique, and in spite of the real charm of their poetry, we cannot but miss the greater interest in human affairs and human personality that fascinated the men who came under the earlier and fresher influence of the Renaissance. The shift of emphasis from the charm of life to the charm of art is felt in the poetry of all men who wrote after 1616.

Shirley is the lineal descendant of Beaumont and Fletcher, and continues the same vein of delicate sentiment, the same dramatic effectiveness, and the same romantic themes of these poets. He studied these men assiduously, and he comes as near to them in quality and kind of work as it is possible for one artist independently to follow another. The obvious criticism passed upon Beaumont and Fletcher is applicable to Shirley: he was essentially a literary artist rather than a professed student of human life. He was the dramatic poet of a courtly circle. What the audience of the Cockpit wanted was not a profound criticism of life, but something to while away an hour or two pleasantly. Shirley gave them dramatized romantic story, kept at a literary level by frequent touches of charming poetry. Interest in his characteristic plays is directed to the narrative rather than to character in action. This emphasis on the story interest made his plays pleasant to listen to just as they are pleasant to read; but they do not take vital hold of one who studies them, and it is easy to forget the substance of them. A pleasing corroboration of this came to my notice in some recent reading. I have forgotten the author, but I think it was Lowell. He tells of seeing a volume of Shirley on his library shelves. Attracted to fresh reading in the old dramatists, he took down the volume only to find the pages marked by his own pencilings. He had evidently read this book at an earlier time, but the memory of it had completely deserted him. Whatever criticism there is in this fact is probably fundamental to all purely romantic story. Even the greater plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are difficult to remember in detail. There is

something in the conventionality of the romantic plots, a lack of vital characterization, which seems to account for this. The momentary zest of the cleverly constructed plots, a prettiness and charming sufficiency of line, carries one through these plays with interest and leaves one pleasantly satisfied; but they do not fix themselves in one's memory never to be forgotten. One closes a volume of Shirley with the same feeling with which the poet's audience of courtly ladies and gentlemen must have left the Cock-pit, that of having been pleasantly and worthily entertained, without a rankling thought or startling fact left in the memory to disturb one's ordinary view of life.

The tragic bitterness and humorousness of experience depicted in the pages of the greater Elizabethans was the result of a glad zest in life that animated noble and citizen alike in Elizabeth's day. The moral and political muddle that developed under James did away with this. Under the Stuarts the courtier class drew away to themselves, and carried with them the drama as an amusement for their leisure, one would think in later years as a blind to hide the darkening prospect. Shirley was the playwright of this class, and his plays were contrived for their amusement. The conventionality and remoteness of romantic story is what had traditionally pleased aristocratic audiences. Shirley seized upon this interest, and it is only incidentally that his plays suggest the more serious function of a criticism of life. The consequent loss of power and universal significance in his work is the obvious criticism brought against him by his modern readers. Assuming, then, the character of the art that Shirley favored, and any criticism attaching to it, it will be interesting at this point to note the professional conditions that confronted him when he began his career, and to trace how his talents combining with circumstances led to his ultimate success.

In 1625 the master hands had ceased to write in Elizabethan comedy, and the period of decadence had begun. Fletcher died in this year, and Jonson, although he continued his leadership in letters, was not to add anything of importance to the work he had gathered together in 1616. Chapman had fallen into real obscurity, and is only heard from in his doubtful collaboration with Shirley; while the exponents of the old popular comedy had long ago completed their work. Shirley had already achieved his

first success in his play, *Love Tricks*, before Henrietta Maria in 1625 created by patent what was afterwards known as the Queen's men. This patronage of the Queen Consort soon raised her company to competition with the older and more important company of the King's men, the continuance of whose patent Charles had sanctioned by one of the first acts of his reign. The way of Shirley's succession to primacy in the Queen's Company was freed from serious competition, and the happy success of his early ventures secured him in his place. Massinger, already established in his career, was amply provided for at the head of the King's Company. Ford did not make his first dramatic venture until 1628; furthermore, he never assumed a professional attitude toward the drama. The poets of the younger generation, Brome, Cartwright, and Davenant, who come on somewhat later, were unable in either imagination or technical skill to surpass the playwright of the Queen's Company. Massinger thus remained to the end Shirley's only important professional rival.

But aside from the fact that Shirley had no immediate rival, if we look more closely we shall see how perfectly qualified he was for the position that was waiting for him at the head of the Queen's Company. Before he came to London in 1625 to set up as a playwright, he had led the life of a modest and retired gentleman. He had proceeded to his Master's Degree in 1619, and afterwards had taken orders, becoming a minister at St. Albans. Between 1623 and 1625, he became a convert to the Church of Rome, and held the mastership of a St. Albans grammar-school. From such quiet and refined pursuits, and encouraged by the great success of his first venture, he came up to the metropolis as a writer of plays. His cultivation and gentlemanly qualities, coupled with his real ability as a dramatic craftsman, explain the patronage of many friends of the theater, among whom the King and Queen were the most prominent. To his royal patroness he must have been especially acceptable, for he was elegant and amiable in manner, and bore always after his conversion a constant attachment to the Catholic faith.¹ He was heartily in sympathy with the life of the court, and frequently mentioned in his plays with

¹For references to Shirley's plays substantiating this statement, see Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature*, III, p. 90n.

full acceptance the Stuart doctrine of the divine right of kings.¹ His perfect harmony with his courtier audience is evinced by the fact that he was seemingly uninfluenced by any contemporary contentions either political or religious. In none of his plays is there the slightest anticipation of the impending struggle; nowhere any gloomy reflection, any melancholy lines that would lead us to believe that the seriousness of the political situation had ever intruded upon his thought. Nor is there in Shirley any trace of the growing influence of Puritanism, which had begun to exert a control over the writings of some of his contemporaries. His attitude of artistic disengagement was largely due to his acceptance of life as he found it in the courtly circle for which he wrote. At peace with himself and his times, Shirley wrote to please. His philosophy is never that of the misanthrope; he never plays the part of the satirist, but always writes from the standpoint of a happy participant in the life of the world. The public for which he wrote did not care for moralizing; they left that to the Puritans and the common people. They came to the theater to be amused, and Shirley, by training polite and affable, and at least in sympathies a part of them, fell naturally to the place of their purveyor.

But Shirley's success and real merits are founded on a deeper basis than the broader sympathies of a man of the world alone would justify. He had a ready learning, and was thoroughly versed in the writings of his predecessors. Before he came up to London, the editing of the older men was under way. Ben Jonson had collected his plays in 1616; Shakespeare was edited in 1623. Later, in 1632, Lyly was collected, and Marston in 1633. Shirley was obviously a "devourer" of printed plays. One of the most striking things in first reading his works is the constant reminiscences of the older writers.² The charge of unoriginality has commonly been lodged against him with some show of truth;

¹*Dramatic Works*, III, p. 467:

"Princes are here
The copies of eternity, and create,
When they but will, our happiness."

²*The Traitor* is an interesting example of Shirley's intimacy with his predecessors. Act I, 2 recalls the traitor scene in *Henry V*; Act III, 1 recalls a famous scene in *Henry IV*; and the masque in Act III, 2 is reminiscent of *Hamlet*.

but even unoriginality does not preclude success. His use of old themes and familiar motives may have been one element in his success, especially as he was able to use over and over again old dramatic devices, and yet maintain a novelty of combination and a charm of poetical phrase that delighted and surprised. Not only had his predecessors bequeathed him substance for his drama, but he had evidently studied their methods with discrimination, for in a purely technical sense he rarely fell into any of their special sins.

Combined with a wide knowledge of the older drama was Shirley's own native sense of what was truly dramatic. It is hardly fair to him to say that "he avoids over-emphasis, as much from exhaustion as from good taste."¹ It robs the man of a distinguishing virtue. To have used material that had done service upon the stage for over fifty years with so much freshness and dramatic mastery was no mean accomplishment. His art was eclectic, to be sure, but his eclecticism was guided by a discerning judgment only possible in one gifted with real dramatic insight. And be it remembered that he was prescribed by the greatest masters; and to so intimate a student of them, and modest withal, an unawareness of this limitation was impossible. Let us not deprive Shirley of the virtue of moderation, when we have before us the excesses of his lesser contemporaries and the doubtful experiments of the greater poet, Ford.

It has been seen under what favorable circumstances Shirley found a place waiting for his special talents; how he was unembarrassed by any close competition; and how his personal qualities made him acceptable to the audience for which he wrote. To his profession he brought a mind familiar with the practice of his greater predecessors and trained in their methods; and to this he added, as we shall see, his native talents of a true dramatic sense, no mean vein of poetry, and a fecundity of production that put all rivalry without bounds.

Some of Shirley's best work is to be found in his comedies of London life. In this field, as in the whole province of his work, he has attempted a surprising number of themes and varying types. One, curiously enough, is a moral interlude with abstract

¹Garnett and Gosse, *English Literature*, II, p. 359.

characters; several are pure comedy with just the suggestion of a serious background; two at least are distinctly serious with comic secondary plots or comic episodes; while three on fashionable London life are pure comedies of manners. There are in all some ten or eleven of these comedies.¹ In his first play, *Love Tricks, or the School of Compliment*, Shirley betrays very plainly where he has fed. It is a crude example of eclecticism in which the art of the dramatist has not been sufficiently developed to cover palpable borrowings. The play is heterogeneous, combining several forms of drama, and recalling in different places specific scenes from Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher.² It is interesting as a juvenile exercise in methods that were later to assume artistic poise. *A Contention for Honor and Riches* Langbaine was at a loss to classify, being in doubt whether to call it an "Interlude" or an "Entertainment." It was merely Shirley's attempt to apply the older methods of the morality to the life of his times, and illustrates the poet's comprehensive range. The play is well worth reading for the graphic pictures of London types, in which Shirley appears in a more clearly marked satirical vein than usual, but does not call for detailed remarks here.

Perhaps the best of Shirley's earlier comedies is *The Witty Fair One*. . It is especially remarkable for the constructive ability and dramatic discernment shown in the clever plotting of its merry intrigue. It is a play in which the old theme of the outwitting of a father by a daughter in her attempt to marry against his wishes is treated with surprising ingenuity. The great interest of this play is its revelation of the master dramatist in Shirley at so early a date as 1628. The use of the ambiguous message of Violetta in the first act; the still more exciting exchange of letters which later on carries the action to its culmination with absorbing interest; the novelty of the sub-plot, in which Master Fowler is fooled into believing himself dead;—all are strikingly dramatic, and give rise to no end of witty dialogue. Complete unity is maintained in a strict subordination of the secondary action and a skillful economy in the characters. Sensible, though seemingly

¹*Love Tricks, The Wedding, The Brothers, The Witty Fair One, The Changes, Hyde Park, The Ball, The Gamester, The Example, The Lady of Pleasure, The Constant Maid.*

²Cf. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, II, p. 287.

dismissed from the scene at one time, appears at the end as an instrument of retributive justice. The Tutor, who has given us some good fooling in the early part of the play, takes a leading part in the gulling of the almost infallible Brains, a consummation that brings the action to its closing scenes. The play remains a triumphant example of Shirley's constructive skill, and in the handling of the intrigue it follows methods at the other end of the art from such plays, for instance, as the *All Fools* of Chapman.

In *The Witty Fair One* the comic element all but overshadows the serious interest in the love affair of Violetta and Aimwell. We now turn to a type of comedy, probably more characteristic of Shirley, in which the serious interest predominates. *The Wedding* comes very near to tragedy, but is relieved by comic scenes in which Shirley shows a marked advance over his earliest attempts in *Love Tricks*. But a play of this type that is more completely representative of Shirley is *The Example*. It offers in both its main and secondary actions dramatic themes of which he seems never to have tired. The illicit pursuit of Lady Peregrine by Fitzavarice, and his final regeneration under the spell of her virtue and womanliness, is, as we shall see, the poet's favorite situation. The secondary plot, in which Jacinta gulls a pair of foolish lovers, was no less attractive to him as a means of comic effect. A continuous thread of fun is kept up in the entrances and exits of Sir Solitary Plot, a direct imitation of Jonson's "humours." Shirley's eye for the dramatic is nowhere more fittingly illustrated than in the complication that arises out of the arrest of Peregrine for his debt to Fitzavarice. What could convince the jealous husband more strongly of the guilt and meanness of his enemy? Yet Fitzavarice is innocent in the matter of the arrest. It gives him, however, a chance to show his real colors, to open the eyes of Peregrine to the real situation. Coming as the play does after the "wicked" play of *The Gamester*, the enforcement of the moral may seem more apparent. It can be safely said, however, that Shirley never takes the moral point of view, but invariably the dramatic and artistic.

It is with renewed interest that we turn to a series of plays in which Shirley has mastered his medium, and, no longer depending on books, drew his characters from the fashionable life about him. In *Hyde Park*, *The Ball*, and *The Lady of Pleasure*, he has done

his most original and characteristic work in the pure comedy of manners. The first two plays follow one another in quick succession, showing the poet ready to follow up a popular "hit" and give his audience a bit of fun on their own foibles. It would be too much to expect more than the lightest comedy on the subjects under treatment; and both of these plays depend for their effect rather upon the gaiety and sprightliness of scene and dialogue than upon any full portrayal of comic character. From the bustle and excitement of races in *Hyde Park*, we pass to the more exclusive indoor amusements in *The Ball*, the novelty of which had inspired the rumor that "strange words" were bandied and strange "revels kept." Thus in the reign of Charles I we get an intimate glimpse of London society at pastimes to which succeeding generations have unfailingly given enthusiastic approval. After the two comedies of 1632, Shirley allowed several years to elapse before presenting his public with another in a similar vein. In 1635, his *Lady of Pleasure* was presented for the first time. Swinburne has said that this comedy "but for a single ugly incongruity would be one of the few finest examples of pure high comedy in verse that our stage could show against that of Molière." This is full praise enough, but warranted in the face of criticism that passes Shirley's art as unoriginal or exhausted. In no comedy of manners that I can call to mind have we so intimate and delightful a picture of any phase of London life. It is impossible for us to think that Shirley is satirizing the life of the leisure classes in this play. He was too much in sympathy with this life himself. What he has done is to accentuate the facts for comic purposes; or at most he is merely laughing at social excesses. The *Lady of Pleasure* has persuaded her husband to sell his holdings in the country and take a house in the Strand. She is soon led into follies and extravagances in which her husband fears for her fame and his purse. Remonstrating in vain, Lord Bornwell hits upon the plan of curing her by indulging in equal extravagance. Having chided her not long before for her excesses, he comes in an assumed mood of having seen the folly of his thrift, and promises to "repent in sack and prodigality" to her heart's content. The ruse works, and to the wife's eyes is revealed the danger to the family exchequer at this furious rate of spending. Subordinated to the main action is a characteristic sub-plot in which the

chief figure is the rich young widow, Celestina. The charming quality of this character is her perfect good sense and good humor. Beautiful in person, she is indulging in all the social pastimes to the extent, perhaps, of impeaching her good name. But accepting for what they are worth the censures and attentions of the needy young gallants who flock about her, she maintains her course, the perfect mistress of her heart and her demeanor. Her character receives its full vindication in the scene where Lord A— makes dishonorable advances. Even in this extremity her self-command does not desert her, and we have the beautiful scene in which she reprimands his Lordship with cleverness and dignity. Another point worth remarking in this play is the variety of contemporary types that are handled. Besides the Lady of Pleasure, who is completely carried away by the gaiety of the Strand, there is the charming character of Celestina; and what we would all too gladly have foregone, the courtesan Decoy, with a side glance into the darker ways of fashionable life. Among the men is to be distinguished the thrifty knight, Sir Thomas Bornwell, who has no intention of losing either his head or his money in the social whirl. Clearly marked from the crew of needy gallants is the higher type of titled aristocracy, Lord A—, who is represented as a man of lineage and influence. Perhaps the closest that Shirley comes to satire in this play is the character of Frederick, through whom, in one of the most delightful of scenes, we obtain a vivid picture of the attitude of the stage toward the university scholar.

In these three plays we meet more or less the same people, and the only novelty is that we see them under varying circumstances. Through all of these plays trips the witty, free-spoken young woman of fashion, Carol in *Hyde Park*, Lucina in *The Ball*, and Celestina in *The Lady of Pleasure*. In each we find a lord, and the character is so much alike in the three plays that it is impossible to believe that Shirley did not have some contemporary figure in mind. It is interesting to note that this character, now Lord Bonville, now Lord Rainbow, and in *The Lady of Pleasure* more anonymously Lord A—, is found in Shirley's favorite situation of making questionable advances to a lady by whom he is later redeemed to more virtuous conduct. Then we have a lot of impecunious men about town, who play the races, hover about the ladies at a fashionable ball, or pay assiduous attentions to the mis-

tress of an exclusive *salon*. In these comedies of a more or less realistic type, we get glimpses into a side of social life which none of Shirley's contemporaries has treated with the same easy familiarity and intimacy.

Enough has been said regarding the comedies most characteristic of Shirley's practice to permit conclusions to be drawn as to his powers as a dramatic artist. In reading his plays on London life, one becomes familiar through frequent repetition with certain types of character and certain situations. Especially in his earlier comedies he has a tendency to emphasize types of character that have appeared before in the plays of Fletcher and Jonson. This tendency toward types has been pointed out in the discussion of the three comedies on fashionable life noticed above; but it must be acknowledged that in these later works he shows a closer reliance upon actual personages and occurrences for his dramatic material. Even more marked than this tendency of his characters to fall into types, is his constant recurrence to certain situations.¹ His favorite theme in the plays on London life is that of a man suddenly restored to his nobler self by the repulse of a virtuous woman whom he is pursuing illicitly. The situation growing out of a strange compound of noble and rakish qualities in a man, recurs in no less than five plays, assuming in one the importance of the main action.² A situation that seemed to be of great comic interest to him is that of the witty woman who gulls a number of troublesome suitors, as in *The Ball* and the subplot of *The Example*.³ But Shirley's peculiar merit as a playwright lies conspicuously in his constructive skill and his sure sense of the dramatic. This is strikingly manifest in such early plays as *The Wedding* and *The Witty Fair One*, the latter being an almost perfect model of construction. His plays are always sustained throughout, while his preference for running a second plot parallel with, yet subordinate to, the main plot has the great advantage of hazarding less the unity of the whole than a complicated interweaving of the various actions. There is also attained by this method a greater simplicity of plot: at least, the

¹See Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, II, p. 296.

²*The Example*.

³Shirley's delight in this kind of love intrigue finds full vent in *The Humorous Courtier*.

apparent complication of the earlier comedies of intrigue is plainly wanting in these plays of Shirley. It is also pleasant to find that the dialogue never lags. As an example of repartee and cleverly conducted dialogue, the *Lady of Pleasure*, for instance, is an irreproachable example. For the purposes of comic expression, Shirley's blank verse is peculiarly fitted. It is frequently very close to prose, and seldom labors under heavy imagery or classical allusion. As a medium for comedy, it is not to be deplored that Shirley's style has not risen to superlative passion or beauty; it is eminently more important to be clear and direct in the lighter vein of comedy.

In his profession Shirley acknowledges Jonson as his master, but in actual practice he is the direct descendant of Beaumont and Fletcher. His comedy is never of the judicial type, and is strikingly free from satire. There is, furthermore, a graceful and "airy conventionality" about his work that raises it in his treatment of manners above the danger of gross realism. If we except the disparity in poetic genius, we will find Shirley's attitude toward life and art to be largely that of Shakespeare, though, of course, much more conventional. It is the spirit of broad sympathy; the looking at life from the point of view of a happy participant rather than that of a critical spectator. It is largely this that marks Shirley of the old romantic line, and gives an original interest to his work. Having read through much in Elizabethan drama that is only historically interesting or merely beautiful in detail, the critic would hardly be just if he withheld a grateful admiration from Shirley, who, in a declining age, maintained a steady excellence in style and execution, and gave to old material new life and fresh charm.

Shirley's gifts as a poet are not commensurate with his abilities as a practical playwright. His imagination seldom does more than play about the deep and searching emotions of the human heart, and rather runs in even, delicate tracery through all that he wrote. It is perhaps for this reason that his genuine quality as a poet is frequently neglected,—this coupled with the fact that he did not hold the secret to that mine from which the earlier masters drew with exhaustless prodigality. His lines are never crowded with thought or too abundant imagery, and his striking

passages frequently owe their quality to one or two deeply poetic lines, as in this short one quoted by Mr. Gosse:¹

"Yes, Felisarda, he is gone, that in
The morning promis'd many years; but death
Hath in a few hours made him as stiff, as all
The winds of winter had thrown cold upon him,
And whisper'd him to marble."²

In the following passage, the simple fidelity and effective movement of the last line creates the poetic value of the whole figure:

"What a brave armour is
An innocent soul! How like a rock it bids
Defiance to a storm, against whose ribs
The insolent waves but dash themselves in pieces,
And fall and hide their heads in passionate foam!"³

And in a somewhat bolder and more lurid vein, the following lines from *The Cardinal*:

"I come
To shew the man you have provok'd, and lost,
And tell you what remains of my revenge.—
Live, but never presume again to marry;
I'll kill the next at the altar, *and quench all
The smiling tapers with his blood.*"⁴

While the beauty of his poetry in many cases becomes a beauty of line, the plays are not without numerous passages of sustained and even elaborate poetry, as in the lines which Dr. Farmer considered in imagination "fine to an extraordinary degree."

¹*Best Plays of Shirley*, Mermaid ser., p. xiii.

²*Shirley*, *Dramatic Works*, I, p. 249.

³*Ibid.*, IV, p. 181.

⁴*Ibid.*, V, p. 320. Cf. also the following from Beaumont and Fletcher, *Philaster*, Act V, Sc. 3, Mermaid Ser., p. 175.

"I'll provide
A masque shall make your Hymen turn his saffron
Into a sullen coat, and sing sad requiems
To your departing souls;
Blood shall put out your torches," etc.

“Her eye did seem to labour with a tear,
 Which suddenly took birth, but, overweigh’d
 With its own swelling, dropp’d upon her bosom,
 Which, by reflection of her light, appear’d
 As nature meant her sorrow for an ornament;
 After, her looks grew cheerful, and I saw
 A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes,
 As if they had gain’d a victory o’er grief,
 And with it many beams twisted themselves,
 Upon whose golden threads the angels walk
 To and again from heaven.”¹

Shirley was very happy in his treatment of gentle sorrow, and in the following lines we meet again a beautiful description of a grief that has all but spent itself:

“Sorrow and I
 Are taking leave, I hope, and these are only
 Some drops after the cloud has wept his violence.”²

Shirley’s poetry is very even in quality. For this reason it is difficult to pick superior passages. It will be interesting, however, to illustrate the poetic quality which he sustains with ease throughout his plays. The following is fairly representative:

“But what story
 Mention’d his name, that had his prince’s bosom,
 Without the people’s hate? ’tis sin enough,
 In some men, to be great; the throng of stars,
 The rout and common people of the sky,
 Move still another way than the sun does,
 That gilds the creature: take your honours back,
 And, if you can, that purple of my veins,
 Which flows in your’s, and you shall leave me in
 A state I shall not fear the great ones’ envy,
 Nor common people’s rage.”³

¹*Dramatic Works*, I, p. 202.

²*Ibid.*, III, p. 206.

³*Ibid.*, II, p. 107.

Another passage from the same play will illustrate the quality of much of the dialogue of Shirley's serious dramas:

"To one whom you have heard talk of,
Your fathers knew him well: one, who will never
Give cause I should suspect him to forsake me;
A constant lover, one whose lips, though cold,
Distil chaste kisses: though our bridal bed
Be not adorn'd with roses, 'twill be green;
We shall have virgin laurel, cypress, yew,
To make us garlands; though no pine do burn,
Our nuptial shall have torches, and our chamber
Shall be cut out of marble, where we'll sleep,
Free from all care for ever: Death, my lord,
I hope, shall be my husband."¹

The passages quoted above are not necessarily examples of Shirley's best poetry; but they will give a very good idea of the poetic character of his plays as a whole. The figures are neither striking nor rare, but the speeches are carried off with ease and grace and an air of refinement and good breeding that recalls the poetry of the Cavalier song-writers. The delicate conventionality and restrained artistry of such speeches fails somehow to carry the conviction of passion springing out of human experience. The poetry does not seem to come inevitably from the character and situation: there is something extra-ornamental about it. Lowell touches the point closely in the following comment: "The sorrows of Beaumont and Fletcher's personages have almost as much charm as sadness in them, and we think of the poet more than of the sufferer. Yet his emotion is genuine, and we feel it to be so even while we feel also that it leaves his mind free to think about it."² Notwithstanding the great advance made by the later Elizabethans in the technical handling of plot and in a sure sense for dramatic situation, they were never able to raise the speeches of their characters to the level of poetry and still retain the verisimilitude to human passion and action that characterizes the work of the earlier masters. This is to my mind the outstanding weakness of the

¹*Dramatic Works*, II, p. 165.

²*Old English Dramatists*, p. 106.

plays of Shirley, as well as of the work of Massinger and Beaumont and Fletcher.

Dr. Ward has said that "in very few of our dramatists shall we meet with so many passages of a poetic beauty, elaborate indeed, but at the same time genuine, and finding its expression in imagery at once original and appropriate. Shirley was endowed with a sense of the picturesque, which would render many of these passages admirable themes for a painter who would allow them to linger in his mind; the hues and shades of the seasons of the year, and of the changes of day and night, and the world of flowers in particular, left their delicate impression upon the receptive fancy of this true poet."¹

Of longer lyrics Shirley has not left us many that are perfect. It was not his common practice to scatter songs throughout his plays. Mr. Gosse has selected one of the most beautiful, the opening lines of which are:

"You virgins, that did late despair
To keep your wealth from cruel men,
Tie up in silk your careless hair,
Soft peace has come again."²

We know that he could write a fine lyric. In the noble lines that King Charles loved to hear from old Bowman, we have one of the finest lyrics in our language. The thought of death as the "leveler" is common in the poetry of all periods, but it has rarely found quite such simple and inevitable expression. "It is a nobly simple piece of verse," says Lowell, "with the slow and solemn cadence of a funeral march. The hint of it seems to have been taken from a passage in that droningly dreary book, the 'Mirror for Magistrates.' This little poem is one of the best instances of the good fortune of the men of that age in the unconscious simplicity and gladness (I know not what else to call it) of their vocabulary. The language, so to speak, had just learned to go alone, and found a joy in its own mere motion, which it lost as it grew older, and to walk was no longer a marvel."³ Though com-

¹*History of English Dramatic Literature*, III, p. 123.

²*Dramatic Works*, V, p. 189.

³*Old English Dramatists*, p. 11.

monly known, it should be quoted as the last word on Shirley as a poet.

"The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Scepter and crown,
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

"Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still:
Early or late,
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath,
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow,
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now,
See, where the victor-victim bleeds:
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb,
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust."¹

It may be well at the expense of some repetition to summarize briefly the investigation of Shirley's methods in dramatic art. The most conspicuous merit of his plays is their constructive excellence. As a playwright he is not excelled by any of the Elizabethan dramatists. He is eclectic in practice, but his eclecticism is not blind following. It is guided by a native sense for the dramatic, and is discriminating and constructive. And it by no means follows that he is unoriginal. It was impossible for him not to be conscious of the vast amount of literary production that

¹*Dramatic Works*, VI, p. 396.

had preceded him, but in spite of this he has succeeded in showing a real inventive power and a sure sense of what is, dramatically speaking, the best. In plotting his plays he has shown a greater simplicity than his predecessors, and is rarely guilty of producing a poorly motived or a disorganized play. The dialogue in his comedies is bright and spontaneous, never involved or obscure. This, combined with a real sense of humor and a perspicuous action, gives the great quality that leads to practical success, namely, interest. Mr. Gosse holds that Shirley of all the Elizabethans could most easily be restored to the modern stage.¹ In his treatment of character, he is slightly conventional and frequently prone to run into types. When we have read through his comedy of manners, we have become well acquainted with the typical Londoner. We have laughed at the rich young countryman who has come up to London to spend his money; we have seen the ins and outs of the needy gallant who wears his own hair, knows how to make a leg, and not infrequently lives by his wits. Then there is the young widow who gulls a brace of lovers; and the poor university scholar whose black clothes and modest manners are sadly out of fashion in the gay metropolis. We pass through many lively scenes: now at a game of dice in an uproarious tavern; now at Hyde Park, playing the races; and more interesting still, at a fashionable ball, which some good Londoners had whispered was something worse than the Family of Love, but which turns out to be nothing more than the first subscription dance. While the characters seldom have that living touch that holds Falstaff so vitally and imperishably in our memory, they have a universality that makes them interesting to-day. Shirley has avoided the main evil incident to a study of contemporary life, that is, a too close realism. He has given us a vivid and sprightly picture of the London of his time, not exactly and minutely, but rather in its essential human spirit. In connection with all this, it must be remembered that Shirley maintained a purely literary drama, writing for the most part in verse. His poetry, as we have seen, is adequate and sincere, characterized by a delicate fancy and susceptibility rather than by depth of passion or philosophical utterance.

¹Gosse, *Best Plays of Shirley*, Mermaid ser., p. xxx.

A brief comment upon Shirley's relative standing among his contemporaries will complete my critical estimate of him. Shirley readily falls into the best company of his time, namely, that of Massinger and Ford. While it may be frankly admitted that Shirley does not present a striking individuality as a poet or a dramatist, we should be careful not to deny this admirable man his chief merit by refusing to recognize the high value of a moderate and sustained literary excellence. Shirley was evidently a man whose modest and cultivated taste would not permit him to indulge in excesses to gain an audience, and his artistic practice is fairly justified by contemporary success. His work, for instance, is not marked by such persistent traits as the moral earnestness and rhetorical vein of Massinger, two qualities that have made a strong appeal to English people at all times. Indeed, it is upon a moral appeal, by no means concealed by the greatest art, that Massinger has so definitely impressed himself upon his readers. Special students of Massinger admit this. Lowell confesses his delight in him to be "not so much for his passion or power, though at times he reaches both, as for the love he shows for those things that are lovely and of good report in human nature, for his sympathy with what is generous and high-minded and honorable."¹ Now Shirley is neither moral nor rhetorical; yet, if we put the matter upon an artistic basis, he sufficiently holds his own with Massinger as a dramatist, while as a poet he as easily surpasses him. To me Massinger just missed poetry in most of what he wrote. As a special instance of his poetic insufficiency we may take *The Guardian*, in which not a line rises to the level of genuine poetry.² The following passage from *Believe as You List* is typical of much of his work. To appreciate fully the failure of the author here, one should have more of the context, but the quotation illustrates clearly the difference between rhetoric and poetry.

"There, in an arbour,
Of itself supported o'er a bubbling spring,
With purple hyacinths and roses covered,
We will enjoy the sweets of life, nor shall

¹*The Old English Dramatists*, p. 122.

²Cf. Symons, "Introduction" to *Best Plays of Massinger*, Mermaid Ser..

Arithmetic sum up the varieties of
 Our amorous dalliance; our viands such,
 As not alone shall nourish appetite,
 But strengthen our performance; and, when called for,
 The quiristers of the air shall give us music;
 And, when we slumber, in a pleasant dream
 You shall behold the mountains of vexations
 Which you have heaped upon the Roman tyrants
 In your free resignation of your kingdom,
 And smile at their afflictions."¹

Here is an opportunity for fine sensuous poetry which the older poets would scarcely have missed. The following passage from Shirley offers a sufficient parallel to the foregoing lines of Massinger. Though the two quotations are antithetical in tone, they are similar in that both are descriptive passages serving the same purpose in the respective plays for which they were written. To me the lines from Shirley carry a truer poetic quality: there is an atmosphere about them that recalls the happy intuition of the earlier masters, especially in the last three lines, which are quite inevitable and finely suggestive.

"This is the place, by his commands, to meet in;
 It has a sad and fatal invitation:
 A hermit that forsakes the world for prayer
 And solitude, would be timorous to live here.
 There's not a spray for birds to perch upon;
 For every tree that overlooks the vale,
 Carries the mark of lightning, and is blasted.
 The day, which smil'd as I came forth, and spread
 Fair beams about, has taken a deep melancholy,
 That sits more ominous in her face than night:
 All darkness is less horrid than half light.
 Never was such a scene for death presented;
 And there's a ragged mountain peeping over,
 With many heads, seeming to crowd themselves
 Spectators of some tragedy."²

¹*Believe As You List*, Act IV, Sc. 2, Mermaid Ser.

²*Dramatic Works*, V, p. 486.

With his other great contemporary, Shirley's comparative standing is more difficult to decide. Ford has dug deeper but more narrowly in his art. He has a penetrating analysis of character almost unbearable at times, but compelling in its fascination; and in his relentless probing of human sorrows and human wrongs he has struck a deeper, sadder note in poetry than any other of his contemporaries. In this song from *The Broken Heart*, there is a poignant beauty frequent in Ford, but seldom reached by Shirley.

"O, no more, no more, too late
Sighs are spent; the burning tapers
Of a life as chaste as fate,
Pure as are unwritten papers,
Are burnt out: no heat, no light
Now remains; 'tis ever night.

"Love is dead; let lovers' eyes,
Locked in endless dreams,
Th' extremes of all extremes,
Ope no more, for now Love dies,
Now Love dies,—implying
Love's martyrs must be ever ever dying."¹

Shirley's verse seldom shows the rare quality of Ford's lyric strain; nor do his tragedies ever present the intensity or subtle analysis of Ford's studies in forbidden experience. But if Shirley was not capable of a "grief deeper than language," nor the master of "brief mysterious words, which well up from the depths of despair," he had other gifts which, taken all in all, probably give him a more significant place in the history of our drama than Ford. In the variety and fecundity of his production; in the uniformly high poetic quality of his verse; in his adherence to the best traditions of the past; and in his complete sympathy with the life of his times, Shirley came nearer to sustaining a national drama than any other man of the Caroline period.

There is one point which probably concerns Shirley more as a man and an Elizabethan than as a playwright and poet. It has been frequently pointed out in the foregoing pages that Shirley rarely, if ever, took a moral point of view. For the most part,

¹*The Broken Heart*, Act IV, Sc. 3, Mermaid Ser., p. 264.

his plays are free from any impropriety of subject, and his attitude on broad lines of conduct is dignified and noble. Nor does he fail to utter noble sentiment.

“When our souls shall leave this dwelling,
The glory of one fair and virtuous action
Is above all the scutcheons on our tomb,
Or silken banners over us.”¹

And this from *The Lady of Pleasure*:

“Something might here be spar’d, with safety of
Your birth and honour, since the truest wealth
Shines from the soul, and draws up just admirers.”²

It is to be regretted that in several of his plays he should have introduced certain “ugly incongruities.” I have alluded to one in *The Lady of Pleasure*, and a similar thing disfigures his noble tragedy, *The Cardinal*. But it is perfectly reasonable to explain these as pure conventions. In the case of *The Gamester*, it would seem that he had actually deserted his art to catch the groundlings. Charles Kingsley is quite justified when he says that we could never put such plays in the hands of our children; but in the full length of his strictures on our author he is somewhat perverse.³ In the first place, it is eminently unfair to neglect Shirley’s average practice, and consider *The Gamester* as typical of all he wrote.⁴ In the second place, it is important to keep in mind the times in which he lived. In the case of *The Gamester*, the King gave Shirley the plot, and later approved the play;⁵ and the worst enemies of Charles were never able to cast the slightest shadow upon his morals as a man. Conventions which today restrict the relations of the sexes did not prevail then; and coarseness and broad jesting sometimes ran to extremes. As Miss Woodbridge has pertinently pointed out in the case of one of Mas-

¹*Dramatic Works*, II, p. 174.

²*Ibid.*, IV, p. 8.

³*Plays and Puritans*. See also Gardiner, *History of England*, VII. Gardiner is hardly fair in his strictures on *The Witty Fair One*.

⁴See Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, II, p. 293.

⁵Malone by Boswell, III, p. 236. See Neilson, W. A., *Cambridge History of English Literature*, VI, pp. 227-8.

singer's plays, we must not take the seeming licenses too seriously, "save as an indication of the state of the comic sense in Massinger's time."¹ Infidelity and adultery, even madness, were at once the most comic and most tragic of themes to the Elizabethan mind. In none of his relations in life was Shirley ever other than a gentleman, and it is evident from his plays that he was upon intimate and friendly terms with the best people of his day. There is a marked spirit of delicacy and refinement in all his work that would oppose any gross immorality. As for this treatment of the common moral problems, it is interesting to compare him with a poet of an earlier generation. It is not so easy to think of the learned and dignified Chapman as immoral. Yet if we examine his plays, we shall find that adultery is a common theme, used even for purely comic purposes. So much is this the case that the results of his several comedies might seem a real indictment of the constancy and chastity of all women. Happily this construction is seldom put upon his plays, and any seeming immorality is assigned to the conventions of the age. Shirley never uses adultery as a purely comic theme, and to woman he has not only given a noble purity, but to her virtue and chastity he has given again and again the power of redeeming a man from the sins of illicit passion. Again in the case of Chapman, it is a question whether he has any other than an artistic end in view when he introduces into his comedies the immoral influences of the court upon the citizen. Shirley "is no disciple of the social heresy that the pleasures of one class have a right to pollute the morals of another."² In fact, his comedies mark a great advance in refinement and feeling over those of the preceding reign, and bear the stamp of a man who had mingled freely and familiarly with the best classes. As Dr. Ward says, "Not one of our pre-Restoration dramatists, save Shakespere and again good Thomas Heywood, deserves less than Shirley to be singled out for condemnation as an offender against principles which in his generation and with his lights he sought to honour and uphold."³

¹*Studies in Jonson's Comedy*, p. 45. The most satisfactory treatment of this matter of the morality of the playwrights will be found in Leslie Stephen's essay on Massinger, *Hours in a Library*, Lond., 1899, II, p. 141.

²Ward, *English Dramatic Literature*, III, p. 125.

³*Ibid.*

CHAPMAN'S PRACTICE IN COMEDY

The thought of a collaboration between two such men as Shirley and Chapman in such a play as *The Ball* is at once stimulating to inquiry. The disparity in the personality and the practice of the two men would at first thought almost prompt a denial of their professional union upon so slight an authority as a title-page by a London printer. The placid and elegant talent of Shirley, first and foremost a dramatist, is sharply at odds with the lofty and ponderous genius of Chapman, to whom the drama appealed largely as a means of popular expression, but whose special gifts found a more congenial activity in the realms of translation and pure poetry. As a mere assertion of this antithesis, however, would hardly seem sufficient for argumentative purposes, a few pages are here devoted to the chief results of a careful study of Chapman's comedies, with the ultimate intention of later applying these results to some settlement of his share in the authorship of *The Ball*.

As a writer of plays, Chapman is better known by his tragedies than by his comedies. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. He labored faithfully on his serious plays to make them worthily represent his art. The result is that they are more consistently excellent than his comedies, in which he took less interest. Not only are his tragedies better as a whole than his comedies, but in such plays as *Busy D'Ambios* and *Byron*, Chapman is most essentially himself, for on serious themes he could best display his fine reflective powers and his normally dignified attitude toward life. In so far, then, as Chapman's tragedies represent him most characteristically as an artist and a man, they have rightfully received more complete critical study than his less serious work in the drama. But while we may accept his tragedies as more representative of Chapman's dramatic art, there is a general reservation to be made. For when every respect has been paid to the effort that went to the writing of these works, and generous account taken of the "full sail" of the rare passages, it must, nevertheless, be admitted that the tragedies are dull reading and as plays unsuccessful. In comparison with such plays as Shirley's *Cardinal* and Ford's *Broken Heart*, Chapman's tragedies suffer

seriously in technical excellence, revealing plainly his inability to adapt his style to the subtle and wayward exigencies of dialogue, or to give the action of his plays movement and verisimilitude to life. An acquaintance with *Byron* makes it easy to accept the common criticism that Chapman's genius is after all epic rather than dramatic, and that his dialogue, while sometimes reaching a noble beauty of utterance, is not infrequently inspired by nothing more than his scholar's zeal.

The ready recognition of Chapman's characteristic bent in his tragedies, and the larger critical emphasis laid upon these plays, has somewhat obscured his gift in comedy. With all due respects to the merits of his tragedies, and with full recognition of their superiority as a whole, the interesting fact remains that Chapman's best individual work in the drama is to be found among his comedies. The play of *All Fools* could with full justice be taken as his dramatic masterpiece. With characteristic lack of dramatic criticalness, however, Chapman has called this best example of his playwriting "the least allow'd birth of" his "shaken brain."¹ It is evident that he never gave himself seriously to comedy. He considered only two of his comedies worthy of a dedication; and in the dedication to these plays, there is a note of disparagement wholly wanting in the addresses prefixed to his tragedies. He probably wrote most of his comedies as a means of revenue, without any high artistic end in view. The want of a serious aim would partially account for the defects as well as the merits of these plays. Structurally his comedies are very unequal. If we were to judge from his practice in comedy, it would hardly seem that he knew when he was writing well and when he was writing ill. In the plays of *All Fools* and *Monsieur D'Olive* he reached a high measure of success; but he is very blind and bungling on the slightly different theme of *The Gentleman Usher*. When working without the steadying hand of a collaborator, he often hurried, and failed to sustain his plots. This carelessness of form is especially noticeable in the final scenes of his plays, where he has a tendency to get lost or overcome in the complication and to lose the best points of the resolution of his comic entanglement. With this loss in dramatic structure, however, there went a gain. Freed

¹Dedication to *All Fools*.

from the trammels of a conscious ideal, Chapman improved in style. Swinburne has noted the "merit of pure and lucid style which distinguishes the best comedies of Chapman from the bulk of his other writings,"¹ and accounts for it in that Chapman "felt himself no longer bound to talk big or stalk stiffly, and in consequence was not too high-minded to move easily and speak gracefully."²

At least once Chapman rose to a happy combination of style and structure in comedy. In *All Fools* he has given us an example of a well developed play, masterly in the handling of an intricate intrigue and inspiring in the sprightliness and sureness of the dialogue. To this play, it would seem, he had given more than his usual attention, for he has told us that

"Lest by others stealth it be imprest
Without my passport, patch'd by other's wit,"

he had given it to the press himself. But while it cannot be denied that in *All Fools* Chapman has shown a fund of real humor and a competent mastery of comic situation, his usual practice both in tragedy and in comedy proves him to have been deficient in dramatic sense, and to have been neither versatile nor prolific. Scholarly by nature, and coming late to the stage, he was never able to gain the skill, nor develop the easy grace and sweet humanity which we find so delightful, for instance, in the less ambitious *Shirley*.

Notwithstanding the inequalities in Chapman's comedies, his dramatic affiliations are fairly clear. He belonged to the classical school as opposed to the comic practice of the more popular romantic playwrights. He did not commit himself definitely to a propaganda, as Jonson did; but he was closely related to the latter both professionally and by temperament. He believed with Jonson that the end of art is moral,³ and, as a rule, he maintained in his comedies the structural principles of Roman comedy. But while Chapman kept on the whole to the comedy of intrigue, and introduced into his plays the stock characters of the Latin

¹*Poems and Minor Translations*, "Introduction," pp. xxv-xxvi.

²*Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

³Dedication to *Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*.

writers, his classic form was by no means pure. Romantic elements crept in, possibly under the influence of the Italian novels and plays that served as the sources of some of his material. *Monsieur D'Olive* has a strong romantic tinge, and the same is true of certain scenes in *The Widow's Tears*. In *The Gentleman Usher*, the romantic plot so completely usurps the interest that it has been taken as a possible experiment of Chapman's in Fletcherian comedy.¹ We might expect an irregular production from an author whose career extended over so long a period as Chapman's did. But Chapman's difficulties probably arose from other sources. It is easier to believe that he failed to develop a more settled and perfect manner through the fact that he began late and that his true talents lay in other fields. In this respect it is interesting to compare him with Jonson. The professional careers of the two men run parallel, with apparently the same opportunities. While Chapman was in the field with the classic model, and even with its specialized form of the humors, as early as Jonson, he never brought his practice to critical perfection, and hence relinquished any possible leadership in the classical school to his sturdy and more able contemporary.

Before entering into an examination of Chapman's comedies, I wish to eliminate from the discussion one that would seem to contribute little to a fair estimation of his general practice. This is the play of *The Gentleman Usher*. It is a new departure for Chapman into tragi-comedy, but so bungling and purposeless that it can hardly be considered more than an experiment. The play is full of dramatic possibilities; but the poet has missed them all, and after starting in light comedy gropes his way into serious drama. In the six remaining comedies, however, certain common characteristics are so well defined as to give a more or less fixed caste to his work. At first sight, these plays have a very complex character; and the complexity is real in the plots and counter-plots of such plays as *All Fools* and *May Day*. But the intricacy of the intrigue excepted, the general plan of construction of the plays is comparatively simple. There are generally two or three characters whose vices or virtues the dramatist wishes to exploit. To carry out this plan, there is a third character, a "dynamic person-

¹Parrott, ed. *All Fools*, Belles-Lettres Ser., p. xlv.

ality," whose business is to set all of the rest by the ears. The remaining characters merely furnish additional humorous touches, and are incidental to the main action. Another principle of construction is a parallelism in the action, often resulting in, or emphasized by, the contrast in the leading characters. *A Humorous Day's Mirth* consists of a series of tricks played upon a jealous old husband and a doting old wife. Lemot, the king's minion, carries on the action. In *All Fools* the same form prevails. Two fathers are played one against the other by the disreputable Renaldo. *Monsieur D'Olive*, while quite different in tone and treatment from the plays just mentioned, has, nevertheless, the same arrangement. The chivalrous Vandome, returning home after some years of absence, finds woe and mourning on all sides. To him the following problem is presented for solution. Marcellina, to whom he is bound in ties of gallantry, has secluded herself on account of the jealousy of her husband, and vowed never to leave her curious retirement. On the other hand, Vandome's sister has died, and her husband, St. Anne, inconsolable in his grief, refuses to consign the body to the grave. The parallelism is very clearly marked here. Marcellina and St. Anne have, so to speak, been deflected from their usual course of life. To restore them to their normal orbit is the object of the action, and Vandome becomes the moving personality. *The Widow's Tears*, the last of Chapman's comedies, is a striking and daring play, yet unsatisfactory by very nature.¹ Eudora, a widow, and Cynthia have professed a fidelity to their husbands that shall outlast death. Thersalio breaks the vowed constancy of the former by winning her to a second marriage; while his brother, husband to Cynthia, tests the fidelity of the latter in a scene that runs a very narrow way between farce and tragedy. The parallelism is no less marked here than in the other plays just mentioned. Thersalio is the one who propels the play in this case.

Besides simplicity and a common constructive principle, the comedies of Chapman have similar comic themes or motifs. To this may be attached more than ordinary importance when we come to consider his collaboration with another author. Either

¹I have omitted *May Day*, which seems in construction nearer to his early work in *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, before he had reached his more settled form. Cf. Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle*, I, p. 57.

Chapman's stock of comic material was especially limited, or he had a peculiar interest in using again and again the same theme. He never tired of recurring to the incontinence of women, and its complementary motif of the jealous husband, to whom "suspicion is the deepest wisdom." In *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* the unpleasant series of adulteries practiced by the hero would seem to involve a real indictment of women. But this must not be too hastily accepted as Chapman's attitude toward the sex. In *A Humorous Day's Mirth* the old husband is at once the victim of his too great jealousy and his doting belief in his wife's constancy. In *All Fools* the jealous husband theme forms the interest of the sub-plot, and it appears as a contributory cause of the complication in *Monsieur D'Olive*. In the "unchivalrous comedy" of *The Widow's Tears*, Chapman's version of the Ephesian Matron, the constancy of women receives an apparent, if not an intended, attack. The question at once arises, What was Chapman's attitude toward the opposite sex? Swinburne in discussing this comedy has suggested that "a speculative commentator might throw out some conjecture to the effect that the poet at fifty-three may have been bent on revenge for a slight offered to some unseasonable courtship of his own"; and we might inquire whether "this keen onslaught on the pretensions of the whole sex to continence or constancy were or were not instigated by an individual rancour." Apparently Swinburne is not looking for a serious answer. To be sure, the passages upon women in most of Chapman's plays are not complimentary;¹ and his constant return to a theme so offensive to our present moral conceptions would seem to indicate a cynical attitude upon Chapman's part. But on the other hand, we have the fine scene between Vincentio and Margaret in *The Gentleman Usher*;² the pretty defense of Gazetta by the page in *All Fools*;³ the romantic devotion of St. Anne in *Monsieur D'Olive*; while the incontinence of the Puritan in *A Humorous Day's Mirth* and Franceschina in *May Day* is not so much the sin at question as the jealousy of old Labervele and the unseasonable amour of Lorenzo. As to the moral phase of the matter, it has

¹See *All Fools*, Gostanzo's advice to Cornelio, Act V, Sc. 2. "Nay, Cornelio, I tell you again," etc. Parrott edition, Lond., 1914.

²Act IV, Sc. 2.

³Act III, Sc. 1.

already been considered above. It should be remembered, however, that Chapman is giving a comic view of life, in a comic form that is highly conventional and equally opposed to any idealistic or realistic interpretation.

Professor Schelling, commenting upon Chapman, has said that he "never passed much beyond the intrigue of Terence and Plautus, the vivacious repartee of Lyly, and the more wayward 'humors' of his friend Jonson."¹ Of character study in the real sense of a living comic personality he has given us nothing. Monsieur D'Olive, Thersalio, and perhaps Bassiolo, are the only characters that we would remember individually for their humor. In reading his comedies, we are constantly referring to the *dramatis personae* to keep the characters straight in our minds. This lack of vital characterization is a criticism commonly lodged against Ben Jonson, but can be more justly urged against his fellow artist, Chapman. It is the loss that comes from presenting character as it is rather than as it is becoming. The Latin method presupposes this neglect of development in character when it relies upon incident and intrigue for its comic effects. The art of Chapman and Jonson differs in this respect from that of Shakespeare.² Their method does not consist in throwing a humorous light over a more or less serious central theme, or by introducing the comic effects episodically by the means of comic personality. There is no serious story at the bottom of the plays most characteristic of Chapman's work in comedy. The one play in which he attempted a combination of serious and comic elements is a lamentable failure, proving completely beyond his control as a dramatic artist. While there is adequate evidence of observation of life and a real sense of humor, the humor does not spring from comic personality, but lies in cleverly contrived situations animated by the comic spirit of dilemma and surprise. That results of a high artistic level cannot be obtained from this method is abundantly refuted by the great works of Jonson. But Chapman, while attempting a similar form, is, compared with his contemporary, greatly restricted in inventiveness, observation, and in vital and vigorous technique. While his plays are amusing and original,

¹*Elizabethan Drama*, I, p. 464.

²Woodbridge, *Studies in Jonson's Comedy*, pp. 40-41.

they belong to a thoroughly intellectual order that relies for its effects upon the development of situations and intrigue, rather than upon the development of character. His plots have little connection with real life, and the thoroughly conventional nature of his art is implied in the removal of the scene to a land the only clue to which is given in the names of the characters. Beyond *Monsieur D'Olive*, Chapman has given us little in the way of comic character. Little, I say, if we are to take such a creation as Falstaff as the measure of high comic art. For there is never a pervading sense of humor in his characters; never a spontaneity suggested in the scenes that would lead one to believe that they were ever otherwise than contrived for the point. Chapman's portrayal of character is objective in distinction to the subjective realization by an author of another personality. In a word, Chapman is limited in his treatment of character by a comic point of view that is intellectual rather than sympathetic and intimate; and the Latin method which he adopted in harmony with his peculiar attitude prescribed anything but a conventional treatment of comic personality.

It has been said above that Chapman was not without a keen observation of life. Highly conventional as his art was, he found the basis of his character-portrayal in the life he saw about him. Though the scene may be laid in France or Italy, the characters are the old familiar figures of the London citizen and courtier. It is evident from his plays that his observation has fallen largely among the middle classes; and it is doubtful from his comedies whether Chapman really knew in an intimate sense the strictly fashionable and exclusive circles of the London of his times. He is at his best when dealing with the citizen class, as in *All Fools*, *A Humorous Day's Mirth*, and *May Day*. Though high-sounding names and even titles of honor are given to the characters in these plays, they are distinctly bourgeois. Count Labervele in *A Humorous Day's Mirth* is nothing but a variation of Cornelio in *All Fools*, and both of them find their prototype in Old Security in the purely realistic comedy of *Eastward Hoe*. The courtier when introduced is generally some "thirty-pound" knight, more or less disreputable and impecunious. The gulling of the citizen by this class, and the demoralizing influence of the court upon the citizen is a frequent theme in Chapman's comedies. It must be

recognized that the best society in James's reign was neither very moral nor very refined; but it cannot fail to be as easily recognized that nowhere in the comedies most characteristic of Chapman's hand can we feel that we are above the substantial merchant class.

In brief summary of his comic practice, we find that Chapman used the Latin form, deriving much of his material from Italian novels and comedies of intrigue.¹ This was all in harmony with his intellectual conception of the comic spirit and his intimate acquaintance with classical literary art. In point of dramatic construction he is frequently weak. It seemed difficult for him to sustain an action through five acts with any of the interest that we are led to expect in the beginning. *Monsieur D'Olive* is admirably opened as a play, but comes to an end very aimlessly; and it is not infrequent that Chapman gets lost in the maze of his complication, as in *A Humorous Day's Mirth*. While inventive and resourceful in many instances, he is generally limited both in the plan of his plots and in comic situation. His plays are frequently built upon parallel lines of action and contrast, and he seems never to tire of certain stock themes, as the gulling of a jealous husband and the corrupting influence of the court upon citizen life. His limitations are adequately marked in his play of *The Gentleman Usher*, where he made a bungling attempt at romantic comedy. From his theories of dramatic art and his own intellectual and removed point of view, one would expect little in the way of enduring character drawing. Not only is he restricted in the field of his observation, but his scholarly and thoughtful mood makes anything in the highest sense of comic character impossible for him. His mind, from its natural bent and training, could hardly have been otherwise than "judicial"; and comedy, much more than tragedy, requires the detached point of view, a comprehensive sympathy of insight and delineation.

From the foregoing examination of Chapman's traits as a writer of comedy, certain conclusions are clear. He does not seem to have had the easy fecundity that is a distinguishing trait of the earlier Elizabethan dramatists. And whether from conscious purpose or the want of a ready adaptability, he was not

¹Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, I, p. 459.

successful in catching the demands of a rapidly changing public taste. On the other hand, he did not attain to an established type of comedy peculiarly his own, notwithstanding he had collaborated with Jonson, the one man of the period whom he most resembled in talents and temperament, and who brought to artistic perfection a form of comedy to which Chapman seemed generally inclined. Such plays as *Eastward Ho*, and possibly *The Ball*, in which he may have served as joint author, would seem to indicate that he submitted to the guidance of his collaborators, if his share possibly did not consist merely in the suggestion of incident and other plot material. As an independent writer of comedy, Chapman's gifts were few; although we should not forget, in concluding, such an exceptional play as *All Fools*, which in point of style, unity of design, bright and witty invention, has been surpassed only by the greatest work of the period.

THE PLAY CALLED "THE BALL."

On November 18, 1632, the following entry was made in the office-book of Sir Henry Herbert: "In the play of The Ball, written by Sherley, and acted by the Queens players, ther were divers personated so naturally, both of lords and others of the court, that I took it ill, and would have forbidden the play, but that Biston [Christopher Beeston] promiste many things which I found faulte withall should be left out, and that he would not suffer it to be done by the poett any more, who deserves to be punished; and the first that offends in this kind, of poets or players, shall be sure of publique punishment."¹ The play was not printed until 1639, when it appeared in quarto with the following title-page: "The Ball / A / Comedy, / As it was presented by her / Majesties Servants, at the private / House in Drury Lane. / Written by George Chapman and James Shirly. / London, / Printed by Tho. Cotes, for Andrew Crooke, / and William Cooke, 1639." The notice by Herbert, the title-page, and a slight mention of the play in Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure*, constitute the only facts of contemporary evidence that I have been able to find in reference to *The Ball*. As the relative merits of the play in regard to Shirley's other comedies of London life have been sufficiently considered, the present discussion will center about questions arising within the play itself. The establishing of an authoritative text is simplified by the fact that there is only one early quarto, and the first well-known reprint² was not made until 1833, when it appeared in the complete works of Shirley edited by Gifford and Dyce. While any question of an authentic text is thus eliminated, there remains the corruptly printed quarto, which has baffled not only the patience, but the ingenuity, of the indefatigable Gifford. From the character of the text, the title-page of the original copy, and the external notices of the play, several very interesting questions arise. The corruption of the printed quarto of 1639, and the lack of a dedication, suggest that Shirley did not supervise the printing of the play. Is it possible that Shirley was

¹Malone by Boswell, III, pp. 231-232.

²The play is reprinted in *The Old English Drama*, 1825, Vol. 1. For complete list of reprints see Bibliography.

in Ireland at the time? The title-page raises the question of authorship, and is the only external evidence to support the claim of Chapman to a hand in the comedy. From the notice of the play in the memorandum of Sir Henry Herbert, and the imputation of scandal in *The Lady of Pleasure*, our interest is aroused in the contemporary bearings of the play, and especially in the nature of the so-called "ball." Since these problems involve much that is interesting that would not suggest itself except in this particular connection, and cover, as I see it, the historical interest of the play, I shall consider them in the order given above.

It was not Shirley's custom, or perhaps even his right, to publish his plays immediately after they had been presented on the stage. The managers were as completely vested with all rights in the plays as they had been in the days of Elizabeth.¹ It happened, then, that *The Ball*, which had been licensed in November, 1632, was not given to the press until 1639. In this year it appeared with two other plays, one of which was *Chabot*, also ascribed to Chapman and Shirley. Between the years 1637 and 1640, some eleven plays of Shirley had appeared in print;² all but three from the same publishers, all without dedications, and many of them very corrupt in text. The lack of a dedication and any care for the integrity of the text has led Fleay to believe that Shirley was not in England during the years 1637 and 1640, and that these plays were not prepared by him for the press.³ After examining the plays themselves, and considering the restrictions due to the plague at the time, and the change in the status of the various companies, I am inclined to accept Fleay's theory as at least probable.

In the spring of 1636, the plague having broken out with unusual violence, it was found necessary to prohibit large assemblies of people, and the theaters were consequently closed on May twelfth.⁴ The restriction continued until the twenty-third of February, when "the bill of the plague made the number at forty

¹See Collier, *English Dramatic Poetry*, II, footnote, pp. 83, 91.

²*The Example, The Gamester, The Duke's Mistress, Chabot, The Ball, The Nightwalker, Love's Cruelty, The Coronation, Arcadia, St. Patrick, The Constant Maid.*

³*Biographical Chronical*, II, pp. 235, 243.

⁴Malone by Boswell, III, p. 239.

four, upon which decrease the king gave the players their liberty, and they began the 24 February 1636 [1636-7]."¹ But this liberty lasted only for a few days, for Collier, quoting an entry in the Privy Council Register, tells us that the order of suppression was resumed on the first of March, "'and playes, dancing on the ropes,' etc., were no longer allowed."² From Malone we learn that "the plague increasinge, the players laye still untile the 2 of October, when they had leave to play."³ The public theaters had thus been closed with the exception of a few days from May, 1636, to October, 1637. The King, however, kept the holidays at Hampton Court, and commanded the attendance of his own players.⁴ Sir Henry Herbert gives a list of twelve plays given at Court during Christmas and Shrovetide. It is a significant fact that none of Shirley's plays are given in this list, and the Queen's men are not mentioned as having performed before the sovereign. The players at the Cockpit were idle in London, for there is no account of their having acted in the provinces.⁵ Shirley had always been popular at Court, and it is highly probable that if he had been in London during this "long silence" of the stage, he and the Queen's men would have appeared at Court. It is certain that Shirley was in Ireland during the year and a half that the theaters were closed, and it would be entirely consistent with the facts as we have them to conclude that he had gone to Ireland shortly after the closing of the theaters in the spring of 1636. *The Royal Master* was entered in the *Stationers' Register* for publication on March 13, 1638. The dedication was written, at latest, before October, 1637, when the restriction on the theaters was removed, and the long suppression of plays, lasting a year and a half, was ended. The dedication is as follows:

"It was my happiness, being a stranger in this kingdom, to kiss your lordship's hands, to which your nobleness, and my own ambition encouraged me; nor was it without justice to your name, to tender the first fruits of my observance to your lordship, whom this island acknowledgeth her first native ornament and top branch

¹Malone by Boswell, III, p. 239.

²*English Dramatic Poetry*, II, p. 81.

³Malone by Boswell, III, p. 239.

⁴Collier, *English Dramatic Poetry*, II, p. 76.

⁵Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, I, p. 267.

of honour. Be pleased now, my most honourable lord, since my affairs in England hasten my departure, and prevent my personal attendance, that something of me may be honoured to wait upon you in my absence; this poem; 'tis new, and never yet personated; but expected with the first, when the English stage shall be recovered from her long silence, and her now languishing scene changed into a welcome return of wits and men. And when, by the favour of the winds and sea, I salute my country again, I shall report a story of the Irish honour, and hold myself not meanly fortunate to have been written and received," etc.¹

From this dedication we learn that *The Royal Master* is the first of his plays that Shirley thought worthy of offering to a patron in Ireland; we also learn that the theaters are still closed, and that Shirley's affairs are calling him to England before the play has been presented. It cannot be said with certainty just when he went to England, but I can see no reason for disagreeing with Fleay's opinion that it was about the time when the restriction on plays was removed in February of 1637.² Upon arriving in England, Shirley found that the plague had abated only temporarily, and, as there seemed no immediate prospect of the theaters being opened, he prepared the plays *Hyde Park*, *The Young Admiral*, and *The Lady of Pleasure* for the press.³ I have only one criticism to make of Fleay in regard to his conjecture of Shirley's visit to Ireland, and that is that he is, as usual, a little too dogmatic in his statements. He assumes, to begin with, that Shirley never gave a play to the press without a dedication, and when any fact varies from this assumption, it is entirely rejected. The whole of this matter is involved in obscurity, and the best that we can do is to draw conclusions that do not violate the few facts that we have. Fleay was the first to make a careful examination of these facts, and his conclusions are in the main correct. When Shirley found that there was to be a long suppression of plays,

¹"In 1637 Shirley went to Ireland, under the patronage of George, Earl of Kildare, to whom he dedicated his *Royal Master*." Letter from Octavius Gilchrist, in Wilson's *History of the Merchant Taylor's School*, Pt. II, p. 673. This is cited by Dyce as the probable date of Shirley's going to Ireland. (Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, I, p. xxxiv.) But what was Gilchrist's authority?

²*Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 244.

³These plays were entered in the *Stationers' Register*, IV, p. 355, April 13, 1637, for A. Crooke and W. Cooke. All are dedicated.

he left for Ireland. Whether he left *The Royal Master* in the hands of the publisher, or sent it over later, the fact remains that this play was not entered for publication in England until March 13, 1638. We know from the title-page of the first copy that it had been acted in Ireland before the Lord Deputy in the castle, as well as at the Dublin Theater. It was licensed April 23, 1638, for performance in England, and was probably given by the Queen's men at Salisbury Court.¹ Shirley himself has told us in a prologue written for Ogilby's theater that he was at least two years in Ireland:

"I'll tell you what a poet says; two year
He has liv'd in Dublin";²

but, as we do not know the exact date of this prologue, it contributes little as to the limits of Shirley's visit. Robert Hitchcock, writing on the Irish stage, says that "in 1638, three years after their commencement, they produced a new play, called the *Royal Master*, written by Shirley, an intimate friend of the manager."³ It is possible that Hitchcock had recourse to some authority unknown to later scholarship, but it is more probable that he drew a hasty inference from the date on the printed title-page.

Although we know that plays were given at the public theaters, Sir Henry Herbert, unfortunately, has only mentioned Massinger's *King and Subject* between October 2, 1637, and April 9, 1640.⁴ It is quite certain that *Saint Patrick for Ireland*, *The Constant Maid*, *The Politician*, *The Gentleman of Venice*, and *Rosania* were all given in Ireland. The first two plays were not licensed, and were probably not reproduced in England. *The Politician* and *The Gentleman of Venice* were given by the Queen's men at Salisbury Court, while the last-named play, *Rosania*, marks Shirley's return from Ireland, when he began writing for the King's men. His recent return is established in the prologue to *The Imposture* (which was licensed for the King's men November 10, 1640), where we read that "he has been stranger long to the English

¹See Collier, *English Dramatic Poetry*, III, p. 331; and Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 242.

²*Dramatic Works*, VI, p. 493.

³Hitchcock, *Historical View of the Irish Stage*, I, p. 12.

⁴See Malone by Boswell, III, p. 240.

scene." There is continuous evidence in *The Royal Master*, *Rosania* (published as *The Doubtful Heir*), and *The Imposture* to credit the theory that Shirley had resided in Ireland in the interval between 1636 and 1640. *The Politician* and *The Gentleman of Venice*, which we do not know to have been given in Ireland, could easily have been sent over to the Queen's men as Fleay implies;¹ and when we add to these *St. Patrick for Ireland* and *The Constant Maid*, of the performance of which in England there is no mention, we are only crediting Shirley with an activity which would bear out the fecundity of his previous career. During the time that Shirley was away, thirteen of his plays had been published, only two of which bore dedications. While I am not willing to go so far as Fleay and say that Shirley never published a play without a dedication, it is not probable that so large a number would have issued from the press consecutively without dedication, if Shirley had supervised the publication. Besides the corrupt text of several of these plays, which would corroborate this view, there is good reason to believe that during the years 1637, 1638, 1639 the Queen's players had been selling Shirley's plays surreptitiously to the publishers Cooke and Crooke.

When Shirley first associated himself with the Cockpit theater, it was held to be inferior to the Blackfriars. In 1630, T. Carew (in some lines prefixed to Davenant's *Just Italian*, acted at the Blackfriars) puts the Cockpit on a par with the Red Bull. Two lines in F. Lenton's *Young Gallant's Whirligig*, 1629, would indicate that the performances at the Drury Lane house were inferior to those given by the King's men:

"The Cockpit heretofore would serve his wit,
But now upon the Friars stage he'll sit."

But Shirley gradually eliminated this disparity in the two houses, and from 1630 on we find the Queen's men playing often at Court, and even drawing compliments from the sovereign, who seems to have kept in close touch with the stage.² Shirley was called upon to write the masque given by the Inns of

¹*Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 245.

²Sir Henry Herbert notes in regard to *The Gamester*: "The King said it was the best play he had seen for seven years." Malone by Boswell, III, p. 236.

Court in February, 1633, the most sumptuous theatrical performance given during the two Stuart reigns; and by 1635 the Queen's men were scoring success upon success in the plays from the pen of their graceful and prolific poet. In May, 1636, the theaters were closed on account of the plague, and after the final resumption of plays in October, 1637, the Queen's men do not seem to have maintained their former prestige. They play less often at Court,¹ and are finally supplanted in their old stand in Drury Lane by a company of boys under the leadership of Beeston. Just what caused this loss of reputation it is hard to tell, but it may be ascribed to the hardships of the long period of closed houses and the loss of their popular poet, who had probably retired to Ireland. The King's men had been tided over by attendance at Court² and by the fact that they still held the services of Massinger. Malone gives an undated entry to the effect that "Mr. Beeston was commanded to make a company of boyes, and began to play at the Cockpitt with them the same day";³ and directly following this the entry: "I disposed of Perkins, Sumner, Sherlock and Turner, to Salisbury Court, and joynd them with the best of that company." These boys are mentioned by Sir Henry Herbert as giving the plays *Cupides Revenge*, February 7, and *Wit Without Money*, February 14, 1636 [1636-7].⁴ Collier has identified them with the company which, in the MS. office-book in the department of the Lord Chamberlain, is called on the tenth of May, 1637, "the New Company."⁵ The exact date for the transfer of the Queen's men to Salisbury Court is fixed by two plays, *The Bride* and *The Antipodes*. The former, a comedy by Thomas Nabbes, was according to the title-page acted in the year 1638 at the Cockpit by "their Majestic Servants." *The Antipodes*, by Brome, was acted in 1638 by the Queen's men at Salisbury Court. It was evidently between these two plays that the transfer mentioned by Herbert, when he joined Turner and the other Queen's men with the best of the company in Fleet Street, took place. Collier has quoted the following note at the end of the *The Anti-*

¹See Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, I, pp. 177, 269.

²*Ibid.*, p. 168.

³Malone by Boswell, III, p. 240.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁵*English Dramatic Poetry*, II, p. 78.

podes: "Courteous Reader, you shall find in this book more than was presented upon the stage, and left out of the presentation for superfluous length (as some of the players pretended): I thought good it should be inserted according to the allowed original, and as it was at first intended for the Cockpit stage, in the right of my most deserving friend, Mr. William Beeston,¹ unto whom it properly appertained; and so I leave it to thy perusal, as it was generally applauded and well acted at Salisbury Court."²

When the Queen's Company gave up the Cockpit theater, the plays that had previously been given at that play-house evidently passed into the hands of William Beeston; for in August, 1639, the Lord Chamberlain issued an order establishing Beeston in his claims to the end that "any other company of actors, in or about London, shall not presume to act any of them to the prejudice of him."³ In the list of plays given in this document there are many of Shirley's; and it is quite clear that in this break-up of the Queen's Company many of the plays belonging to the Cockpit had passed into the hands of the publishers. But surreptitious copies of plays had long before this found their way to the press. Collier notes that "the MS. in the office of the Lord Chamberlain under date of the 10th of June, 1637, contains an instrument, for which we have hitherto seen no precedent—against the printing of plays, to the prejudice of the companies to whom they belonged, and by whom they had been bought from the authors. During the suspension of the stage in consequence of the number of deaths, in order to gratify the theatrical avidity of the public, certain printers, who had surreptitiously got manuscript plays into their hands, began to print and publish them."⁴ It is not an unwarranted inference that during the plague the Queen's men had been selling the plays belonging to the Cockpit theater; and when the company was reorganized with the best of the Salisbury Court men, it is highly probable that a number of plays again found their way into the hands of the publishers.⁵ In this con-

¹William Beeston succeeded his brother Christopher (father according to Fleay, *London Stage*, p. 348.)

²*English Dramatic Poetry*, III, p. 332.

³*Ibid.*, II, p. 92.

⁴*Ibid.*, II, p. 82.

⁵See Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 243; also Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, I, p. 169n. Printers were getting hold of plays dis-

nction it becomes significant that of the thirteen plays of Shirley printed between October, 1637, and April, 1640, only two were dedicated by him. Of these two plays, *The Royal Master* had been prepared by Shirley for the press, and was entered in the *Stationers' Register* before it was licensed for the stage. It was probably left in the publishers' hands when Shirley paid his flying visit to England in 1637. Of the other exception, *The Maid's Revenge*, we are not certain as to the circumstances.¹ Many of the plays printed without dedications are corrupt in text; and two appeared under peculiar circumstances. *Love's Cruelty* was entered twice in the *Stationers' Register*, once on April 25, 1639, for Master Crooke and William Cooke,² and later for John Williams and Francis Eggesfield.³ *The Coronation* was published as by John Fletcher, but was later claimed by Shirley.⁴

In view of the facts as stated above, the matter would seem to have been as follows. During the long suppression of the theaters (from May, 1636, to October, 1637), plays belonging to various theaters were being surreptitiously printed. To such an extent had this been going on that the Lord Chamberlain issued an unusual order to protect the various managers. After the resumption of plays in October, 1637, the Queen's men seem to have lost in prestige, and were finally in 1638 reorganized with the company at Salisbury Court. A little later we find William Beeston protected by an order from the Lord Chamberlain in his rights to the plays which had fallen to him when he became the manager of the company known as "Beeston's Boys," and which would seem to indicate that there had been dispute as to the ownership of these plays due to the transfer of the Queen's Company to the house in Fleet Street. During this period and the following year, we have every reason to believe that Shirley was not in England; and dur-

honestly; that they should have procured them through the actors is the most plausible theory. Fleay, perhaps, goes too far in stating that the actors sold plays that they had picked up at special court performances, and in otherwise amplifying his theory. But in the main points of his theory he is right.

¹Fleay thinks that this play "being entered for W. Cooke only, had probably been in the publisher's hands since 1634, before A. Crooke joined him in these publications." *Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 243.

²*Stationers' Register* by Arber, IV, p. 438.

³*Ibid.*, p. 465. Nov. 29, 1639.

⁴In a list of plays appended to *The Cardinal*, printed 1652.

ing this time a number of his plays had appeared without dedications and corrupt in text. It is further interesting to note that these plays, were, with one exception,¹ published by W. Cooke and A. Crooke, who do not appear as publishers to any other leading dramatist of the time. Of the plays above mentioned, one was later sold to another publisher, and one wrongly ascribed to Fletcher. With such facts before us, it would not seem a hasty conclusion to infer that during Shirley's absence in Ireland his plays had been appearing, without his supervision, from playhouse texts furnished by some of the actors; and we have good grounds for doubting the integrity of the title-pages of these plays where they are not supported by other contemporary evidence. Fleay is of the opinion that when Shirley returned to England and found what the Queen's men had been doing with his plays, he offered his services to the King's men. It seems to me more probable that the loss of prestige by the Queen's Company, and the death of Massinger, leaving Shirley by far the most considerable playwright of his time, would account more naturally for his accession to the more important post at the Blackfriars.

Among the eleven plays of Shirley that issued from the press without the author's sanction or supervision, during the years 1636 to 1640, were two bearing upon their title-pages the name of Chapman as well as that of Shirley. They were a comedy, *The Ball*, and a tragedy called *Chabot, Admiral of France*. The former is entered for license November 18, 1632, by Sir Henry Herbert as by Shirley;² and the latter, April 29, 1635.³ The entry of these plays for publication reads as follows: "24. Octobris 1638. Master Crooke and William Cooke. Entred for their Copie vnder the hands of Master Wykes and Master Rothwell warden a Booke called Phillip Chalbott *Admirall of Ffrance* and *the Ball*. by James Shirley"⁴ Here again there is no mention of Chapman as joint author. The title-pages of these two plays are the only external evidence of the collaboration of Shirley and Chapman;

¹*The Arcadia*, published by J. Williams and F. Eggesfeild. *Stationers' Register*, IV, p. 465.

²Malone by Boswell, III, p. 231 (November 16, on p. 232).

³*Ibid.*, p. 232. Malone in this case has merely given the date of licensing in a list of Shirley's plays registered by Sir Henry Herbert.

⁴*Stationers' Register* by Arber, IV, p. 415.

evidence that may be gravely suspected when we consider the circumstances under which *The Ball* and *Chabot* were printed. Everything would seem to be against this "incongruous union" of Shirley and Chapman. In 1632, Chapman was seventy-three years old, and had not been seen upon the stage in twenty years; while Shirley was one of the leading dramatists of the younger generation, in the first flush of his genius and popularity. When the *Chabot* was licensed in 1635, Chapman had been dead over a year. The subject of authorship in both of these plays must be determined by internal evidence. The subject matter and style of *Chabot* could suggest no other author than Chapman; and as the question of Chapman's part in this play has been adequately treated in another place,¹ it will be unnecessary to enter into it here. Criticism is unanimous in ascribing the play to Chapman. Mr. Lehman, in the monograph above referred to, says that "after a careful comparative study of Chapman's and Shirley's styles and methods I have reached the conclusion that the play was originally written by Chapman and subsequently revised by Shirley. There is scarcely a page upon which the peculiarities of the former's style are not discernible. The principal of these peculiarities are: involved sentences, tortuous thought, and the tendency to philosophize. On the other hand the evidence of revision is to be found in many places. The angular grammatical constructions are not so numerous as in the other plays of Chapman, the thought is somewhat clarified, and there is a greater degree of dramatic unity than is common in Chapman's plays." If the changes named in the last sentence be ascribed to revision, it must have taken more than a hasty revision to accomplish the feat.² To smooth out angular grammatical constructions and to clarify the thought to any degree, would necessitate a laborious overhauling of the original play. But the revision of the play does not establish a personal relation, and, as *Chabot* was licensed nearly a year after Chapman's death, we must look elsewhere for substantial facts. *The Ball* would seem to support the claim of collaboration in *Chabot*. But in this case the sole external proof rests in the title-page. Against this stands the entry in Sir Henry Her-

¹Lehman, *Pub. Univ. of Penn. Philology and Literature*, X, pp. 24-28.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26. See also Fleay in *Anglia*, VIII, p. 408.

bert's office-book, which ascribes it to Shirley with no mention of joint authorship; and in his play, *The Lady of Pleasure*, Shirley makes a definite claim to this play as his own.¹ The disparity in the age, character, and position of the two men would seem to offer radical opposition to any thought of collaboration. At the time of the licensing of *The Ball*, Chapman was a man of seventy-three years, who had outlived most of the men of his own generation, a playwright who had not been seen in comedy in twenty years, the venerable outpost of the Elizabethan age, who had come in his last days to comparative neglect and obscurity. Scholarly and thoughtful in mood, he followed the classical tradition in his plays; and while a lofty dignity pervades his serious work and a pleasant ingenuity his comedy, he is seriously restricted both in the quantity and the quality of his work. In direct antithesis to all this stands the young and popular poet of the reign of Charles; Shirley, a man of the world, but gentlemanly by very instinct; well-read, but not scholarly; graceful and elegant in utterance; prolific and versatile, turning with equal ease from tragedy to comedy, the pastoral, and the masque.

While greatness of thought and a certain lofty morality characterizes the serious plays of Chapman, there is an evident rudeness about many of his characters, a lack of fine polish which was not absent from the best society of Elizabeth's and James's reigns. This, of course, is especially noticeable in his comedy. When we turn to Shirley's comedies of London life, we are at once sensible of a change; we are among a class of people very different from those of whom Chapman wrote. If they are no sounder morally, they are better mannered; there is a marked refinement and elegance about them. This is all the historian Hallam found remarkable in Shirley's plays. "*The Ball*, and also some more among the comedies of Shirley, are so far remarkable and worthy of being read, that they bear witness to a more polished elegance of manners, and a more free intercourse in the higher class, than we find in the comedies of the preceding reign. A queen from France, and that queen Henrietta Maria, was better fitted to give this tone than Anne of Denmark."² The people whom we meet in

¹*Dramatic Works*, IV, p. 9.

²*Literary History of Europe*, III, p. 331.

The Ball, *The Lady of Pleasure*, and *Hyde Park*, are not the people among whom Chapman spent his active life. With the succession of Charles to the throne and the coming of the French queen, there is perceptible among the better classes a distinct tendency to greater refinement of feeling and manner. The sovereign, possessed of all the finer instincts of a gentleman, became the patron of poetry, painting, and music; while the Queen, fresh from the tutelage of Madame de Rambouillet, initiated that movement in England which had for its immediate aim the refinement of social intercourse. The Court was purged of much of the gross immorality that had stained the lives of many whom James had drawn about his person; and it is certain that any such moral debauchery as was openly acted in the intrigue of Somerset and Lady Frances Howard would have been impossible under Charles. That there was much that was frivolous and silly in the pastimes of the better classes must be admitted; and the *précieuse* movement, which the Queen introduced with good intent, soon showed its vain and dangerous side. But, as Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson observes, "the nobility and courtiers who did not quite abandon their debaucheries, yet so revered the king as to retire into corners to practice them."

But the point here is that it is not reasonable to believe that Chapman could have entered into the spirit of such a play as *The Ball*. Not only is its structure contrary to all of his practice, but the problem and people with which it deals are without the bounds of his immediate observation and sympathy. Jonson and Chapman, linked together by the same tastes and training, seem, curiously enough, to have cast their observation among the lower and middle classes. The comedies of the former all have the coarse and homely quality of the people of whom they treat; and while this quality is not so apparent in the work of Chapman, it is sufficiently predominant to warrant the assertion that he had not even associated or entered into sympathy with the fashionable society of the London of his day. I do not wish to detract from the worth of Jonson or Chapman. Both men were true poets and eminently dignified and moral; but there is a lack in both of these men of the broader sympathy and finer elegance of worldly culture; both want the unbending grace of spirit that would tolerate a trivial subject in anything but a satirical light. In *The Ball*,

a contemporary social pastime is taken up and vindicated in its moral character in a light and conventional vein of comedy. The people with whom it deals are from among the courtly circle, and of sufficient rank to warrant the censor in staying the play on account of direct reference to them. In this play, dealing naturally and intimately with court society, full of local "hits" on the monopolies, theaters, and so forth, is it at all probable that Chapman, old and neglected, could have contributed anything of value? As we have seen, Chapman never produced a real comedy of London life. Not one of his comedies has London for its scene. To be sure, his knowledge of human nature is founded upon the life he saw about him; but he has cast it all in a conventional form, the comic interest of which does not rest in character and local allusion, but wholly in trickery and incident. No one can read his comedies without being impressed with their similarity in spirit and structure. Restricted as he was to the Latin comedy of intrigue during all of his active career, it does not seem probable that he would have seriously joined Shirley in the play of *The Ball*, so different in spirit and form from anything that he had done before. On the other hand, the play is just the thing that Shirley had been doing in *Hyde Park*, and went on to do infinitely better in *The Lady of Pleasure*. A consideration of the play itself remains the last resort in the search for evidence to support the collaboration of the two men as given on the title-page.

Gifford, the first editor to comment on this play, says of this joint product of Chapman and Shirley that "the largest portion of it seems to be from the pen of the former."¹ As Gifford died before the edition of 1833 was published, we are without any explanation or reasons for this curious judgment. Dyce, who took up the work where Gifford had left it, says in his introduction to the published work "that *The Ball* was almost entirely the composition of Shirley."² Baker says, "Chapman assisted Shirley in this comedy";³ but he is probably relying merely on the title-page. Swinburne in his essay on Chapman's *Poetical and Dramatic Works* says in regard to *The Ball* and *Chabot*: "These two plays

¹Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 3.

²*Ibid.*, I, p. xix.

³*Biographica Dramatica*, II, p. 46.

were issued by the same printer in the same year for the same publishers, both bearing the names of Chapman and Shirley linked together in the bonds of a most incongruous union: but I know not if there be any further ground for belief in this singular association. The mere difference in age would make the rumour of a collaboration between the eldest of the old English dramatists and the latest disciple of their school so improbable as to demand the corroboration of some trustworthier authority than a bookseller's title-page bearing date five years after the death of Chapman."¹ Dr. Ward believes that "Chapman is *a priori* unlikely to have taken any share in the composition of comic scenes at so late a date as 1632, and it cannot be supposed that those in question were written at an earlier date. If, as the title-page of the quarto asserted, he gave assistance at all to Shirley in this play, it must have been of the slightest description."² Fleay accepts the theory of joint authorship, and is quite ready to replace the parts objected to by Sir Henry Herbert with passages of Chapman's writing, which he thinks are "easily traceable in IV. 3 and V. 1, where Lionel, Stephen, and Loveall replace Travers, Lamount, and Rainbow. In the Chapman part a comedy called *Bartheleme* (read *Bartleme*) is mentioned as acted at the Bear Garden. Of course this is *Bartholomew Fair*, acted at the Hope, the rebuilt Paris Garden, in 1614."³ As the passages to which Fleay refers do not bear any marks of composition peculiar to Chapman, it is hardly necessary to go so far in explaining the replacing of the names Travers, Lamount, and Rainbow by Lionel, Stephen, and Loveall. Gifford in despair over the text writes: "If it were not a mere loss of time to strive to account for the errors of a piece so 'cursedly printed,' we might conjecture that Chapman and Shirley had not compared their list of characters."⁴ The matter is not so difficult to understand. We have good reason to believe that the text was surreptitiously obtained by the publishers, and printed without Shirley's supervision. We also know from Sir

¹Chapman, *Works: Minor Poems and Translations*, p. xxxi.

²*English Dramatic Literature*, III, p. 107.

³*Biographical Chronicle*, II, p. 238. See Fleay's more definite statement, that *The Ball* was an old play of Chapman's rewritten by Shirley, in *Anglia*, VIII, p. 406.

⁴Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 69n.

Henry Herbert that the play had been refused a license until certain passages in reference to well-known lords and ladies had been amended. My conclusion is that the copy used for the quarto was a prompt-copy, in which the changes required by the office of the revels had been carelessly done. The corruption of the text of the quarto, which was not only imperfect in the original copy, but wretchedly printed, would sustain this generalization. Cooke and Crooke had undoubtedly gained possession of the play through the hands of some of the actors. This explanation, it seems to me, remains more closely within the facts as we know them, and requires less of the conjectural. In regard to the passage in which the mention of a comedy called *Martheme* occurs, Fleay is very careless in quoting the quarto.¹ One might easily be led to think that the name of the comedy appeared in the text as *Bartheme*, whereas the passage runs as follows:

“Here I observ’d many remarkeable buildings, as the
Universitie, which some call the Loure, where the
Students made very much of me, and carried me
To the Beare-garden, where I saw a play on the
Bank-side, a very pretty Comedy call’d Martheme,
In London.”

Gifford in a note on this word says that “unless this be a designed blunder for a tragedy on the Massacre of St. *Bartheme* (or Bartholomew), I can form no guess at the word.”² Fleay, intent upon assigning this part of the play to Chapman, boldly asserts that *Martheme* (which he spells *Bartheme*) refers to *Bartholomew Fair*, acted as far back as 1614. But an early date for the passage is contradicted in the next speech of Freshwater, when he speaks of the women as the best actors, evidently referring to the French company which had appeared in London in 1629. I would suggest an entirely different emendation of the word *Martheme*, and joining it with the two following words read *Match Me in London*, a play of Dekker’s printed in 1631 as lately played at the Private House in Drury Lane.³ The misprint in this case

¹Fleay got his reading from Gifford.

²Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 79.

³See reprint of *The Ball* in *Old English Drama*, I, p. 84. Fleay had evi-

would not be any worse than many others in the text; it is also more probable that a printer would mistake a letter within the word than at the beginning; and finally, the reading as given above is perfectly in harmony with the spirit of the passage, which relies for its humor on its flat absurdity.

Considering the play as a whole, there is nothing in the handling of the theme that would recall Chapman. Throughout his own comedies there is a constant recurrence of certain comic situations which have become, so to speak, his stock in trade. It is not necessary that he should repeat these old themes in a work in which he had collaborated; but it is interesting to note that in the play of *The Ball* there is nothing that would suggest Chapman's earlier comedies, while the theme of a rich young widow pursued by designing suitors is peculiarly in the manner of Shirley. It occurs in a very closely related form in *The Lady of Pleasure* where Celestina, followed by several needy gallants, manages to bestow her hand on the right man. The gulling of Bostock and his fellow suitors recalls the sub-plot of *The Example*, in which Jacinta leads her two lovers a merry chase. In the oath which the Lady Lucina demands of Colonel Winfield, there is a relation that Shirley is fond of establishing between a lady and her lover. The condition of Lucina's acceptance of Winfield is to a certain extent the moral regeneration of the latter. This theme is given a much more specific representation in the courtship of Penelope by Fowler in *The Witty Fair One*; and the main plot of *The Example* turns upon the moral regeneration of a man by the woman whom he is pursuing in an immoral way. In the part of the play of *The Ball* involving Lady Rosamond and Lady Honoria, we have another mark of Shirley, who seems to have preferred to subordinate a less important action to the main plot instead of laying himself open to the danger of loss of unity by handling two equally important themes.

However slight and conventional the play of *The Ball* may be, it is an admirable adaptation of Jonsonian comedy to actual contemporary incident. The main interest of the play rests in the gulling by Lucina and her servant Scutilla of a group of trouble-

definitely not carefully examined this reprint, to which I am indebted for the reading above.

some lovers, reminding one in a general way of the intrigue of *Volpone*. There is, further, a simplicity and perspicuity of plot characteristic of later Elizabethan drama, and largely due to the criticism and practice of Jonson. *All Fools* excepted, Chapman nowhere shows either in tragedy or comedy that he had learned the art of clear and sustained plotting. Again in the characters of *The Ball*, one is strikingly reminded of Jonson, especially of *Every Man In* and *Every Man Out of his Humour*. Freshwater recalls Puntarvolo in *Every Man Out*, and Jonson in *Every Man In* calls Bobadill "Master Freshwater," a gibe at the latter's not having crossed the sea, and hence not having seen real military service. Bostock and Barker would seem to have been fashioned on Stephen and Downright in *Every Man In*. Slight as these characters from *The Ball* are, in comparison with the more vigorous drawing of Jonson, I can think of but one instance in which Chapman has done as much, and that is in *Monsieur D'Olive*. Chapman, unlike the younger generation, never learned from the practice of his contemporaries, and is nowhere so successful in following Jonson in his humours as Shirley. If we stop to consider the eclectic character of *The Ball*, the sureness in adaptation of older methods, the unerring judgment that guided the treatment and spirit of this play, we cannot fail to note the peculiar marks of Shirley's art. Furthermore, there is a gaiety and cavalier strain in certain of the scenes and characters that give the play a distinctly Caroline cast. And there is another fact that marks the period of the play: in *The Ball*, we have an interesting example of the allaying of a social scandal by means of comic treatment, a practice that could only grow up in an urban situation plainly foreshadowing that of Pope's time, and pointing away from Elizabethan tradition, to which Chapman, notwithstanding his classical inclinations, properly belonged.

Again, there is nothing in the style that would recall Chapman. The dialogue is sprightly, without any tendency to obscurity in thought or structure, and runs along in a light, colloquial vein. Although the text of the quarto is in the form of blank verse, it can hardly be read as such in many places. In the edition of 1833, the editors have changed several of the scenes to the natural form of prose; and much that remains in blank verse is difficult to scan. The lines contain a varying num-

ber of feet, and there are frequent light endings; and while the movement is prevailingly iambic, much refuses to reduce to any verse form. In fact, most of the dialogue is nothing more than prose. In all of Chapman's work the verse is easily distinguishable from the prose, and there are no signs of a disintegrating tendency. His work is, furthermore, not characterized by the lightness of touch, the intimate conversational quality that pervades the dialogue in *The Ball*; a lightness and animation that leaves no opportunity for lapses into reflective or obscure thought.

Before leaving the subject of the authorship of *The Ball*, it will be well to sum up briefly what has been found in this respect. There is no external evidence except the title-pages of *Chabot* and *The Ball* to prove any collaboration on the part of Chapman and Shirley. It is reasonable to hold that these plays were printed from pirated texts issued without the authors' supervision. The authority of the title-pages is to this extent discredited. Neither by the Master of the Revels nor by the *Stationers' Register* is Chapman mentioned as joint author, while Shirley has definitely claimed *The Ball* in a later play. As this completes the external evidence, the theory of collaboration has little to sustain it, and is open to the gravest doubts. Upon examining the internal evidence, it becomes apparent that it was as impossible for Shirley to have written *Chabot* as it was for Chapman to have written *The Ball*. *Chabot* is a play on contemporary French history, entirely in the manner of Chapman's other tragedies from the same source. It is, however, free from certain faults of Chapman's style, which would suggest a careful revision; and we may assume that, having fallen in an imperfect condition into Shirley's hands, it was completed by him, losing much of its original roughness in the process of revision. *The Ball*, on the other hand, is completely in the manner of Shirley. It is written in defense of a popular pastime, with an intimate knowledge of courtly society, and filled with contemporary allusions to give it local color. It deals with a phase of social life with which Chapman in his fully authenticated work shows no evidence of ever having come in contact. We feel at once in this play that we are among a different sort of people from any we have met in the comedies of the previous reign. It would seem impossible for Chapman to have given Shirley the slightest aid in the composition of *The Ball*. But the complete

mastery shown in the construction of the slight plot, together with the witty, conversational style of the dialogue, leaves no room to doubt to whom the play belongs. The authority of the title-page being questionable, and the remaining evidence, both external and internal, against collaboration, the conclusion is that there was no literary relation between Chapman and Shirley in the case of *The Ball*. This play is to be ascribed entirely to Shirley, while to his revision are due the smoother, more perspicuous verse form and the greater dramatic unity which in *Chabot* stand in marked contrast to the work in Chapman's other French tragedies. There remains the pleasing conjecture that Shirley and Chapman having fallen into an acquaintanceship, the younger man, then at the height of his popularity, came to the aid of the broken fortunes of his venerable fellow artist, first by linking their names on the title-page of *The Ball*, which was entirely his own work, and later by revising for the stage *Chabot*, in the writing of which Chapman had borne the major part of the work.

The intrinsic merits of the play as drama and the important question of authorship apart, there remains a secondary, historical interest in the nature of the so-called "ball." It is interesting to note that the word *ball* as applied in the play affords the earliest record of its use as a substantive to denote a dancing party.¹ Gifford was inclined to believe that the play took its name from the golden ball used in the masque at the end of the play;² but while it must be admitted that there is a punning reference to this device, I hardly think that it gave the play its name. The play would more properly seem to have taken its title from the social pastime which it attempted to free from certain scandalous reports. The gilded ball which is let down from above the stage in the opening of the masque, and which has a pretty reference to the amusement under consideration, is merely a device. In its presentation to the presiding beauty, it suggests an interesting analogy in the poetical drama of George Peele, *The Arraignment of Paris*, in which the golden ball, or apple, was laid in the lap of the Queen as a graceful mark of homage. Gifford says

¹See *New English Dictionary*.

²Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 3. That the name of the play is not taken from this device is indicated in the last two or three lines of the play.

in regard to this play that "from some incidental notices which occur in our old dramas, it should seem that there really was, about this time, a party of ladies and gentlemen who met, in private, at stated periods for the purpose of amusing themselves with masques, dances, etc. Scandalous reports of improper conduct at these assemblies were in circulation, and evidently called forth this comedy, the object of which is to repel them."¹ I have not been fortunate enough to find more than one reference to the ball outside of Shirley's plays, but that one in an interesting connection.² We undoubtedly have in the ball the beginnings of the subscription dance, an institution that has since become an established form in the best British society. That it had but recently sprung into favor is indicated by the fact that whenever the ball is mentioned by one outside of the particular coterie, it is always in a sense of novelty and strangeness. Lord Bornwell in *The Lady of Pleasure* alludes to it as "your meeting call'd the Ball,"³ and Lady Lucina in the play itself remarks:

"Some malice has corrupted your opinion
Of what we call the Ball,"

to which Colonel Winfield replies,

"Your dancing business?"

The noun *ball* as applied to a dance appears in English print for the first time about 1633.⁴ As the name of an assembly for the purposes of dancing the earliest record is probably Shirley's play called *The Ball*. This play was licensed for the stage in November, 1632, but not given to the press until 1639. In the meantime, Shirley had produced his *Lady of Pleasure*, in which he again alludes to the "meetings called the Ball," and this work issued from the press in 1637. The verb meaning to dance is earlier in English. Richardson's *Dictionary* quotes Knox's *Historie of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland*, of which the first edi-

¹Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 3.

²Davenant, *Platonic Lovers*, Act III, Sc. 1.

³Shirley, *Dramatic Works*, IV, p. 9.

⁴*New English Dictionary*. "1633. H. Cogan Pinto's *Voy.* lxxix. 321 All of them together * * * danced a Ball."

tion was dated 1584. And long before, about 1300, the translator of the *Cursor Mundi* used the verb in the Middle English form *bale* (*balen*), from the Old French *baler*. There is little doubt that the word is of French origin, as there is every indication that the social pastime which it designates was also from that source, Shirley calls it

"A device transported hither by some Ladies
That affect Tenice."¹

At this time French fashions were in high favor, and French masters were especially sought out for instruction in dancing. It is a stock complaint of Shirley that his nation is famous for patronising foreigners in matters of art and fashion.

"Why so, tis necessary, trust while you
Live, the Frenchman with your legs, your
Face with the Dutch."²

As to the exact nature of the ball in the play, we find that it was a meeting at a private house, more or less exclusive, where ladies and gentlemen enjoyed a masque followed by a banquet and dance. It was a fashionable amusement, something, shall we say, of a fad, which by its novelty and exclusive nature had aroused the curiosity and suspicion of those not elected to the coterie. What more natural than that when men gathered at the ordinaries and news failed,—the Dutch had taken no fishing boats, and "coal-ships had landed safe at Newcastle,"—they should fall to talking of the ball. Not knowing just what it was, and a little piqued that they had not been asked, it was a very human inference that "strange words" were "bandied" and "strange revels" kept. Scandal once at work, we finally get the sinister imputation of Lord Bornwell that it was but the Family of Love translated into more costly sin. Dr. Ward says: "The main purpose of this comedy [*The Ball*] seems to have been to give the lie to the scandalous reports which had arisen in connexion with the first attempts at establishing Subscription Balls. How far these early efforts in support of what was to grow into one of the

¹See *Dramatic Works*, III, p. 74.

²*Ibid.*, p. 45. Quotations above from the quarto.

most respectable of British institutions had virtue on their side, it is perhaps impossible to ascertain."¹ At the time *The Ball* was written, Shirley saw fit to vindicate the amusement, perhaps under pressure brought to bear through the Office of the Revels by certain fashionable people who had been too naturally personated in the play as it was originally written. Several years later in 1635, the poet alludes to the ball again in his *Lady of Pleasure* in what might be considered a less favorable light. Lord Bornwell says:

"There was a Play on't,
And had the poet not been bribed to a modest
Expression of your antic gambols in't,
Some darks had been discover'd, and the deeds too:
In time he may repent, and make some blush,
To see the second part danced on the stage."²

Had the ball really assumed an immoral aspect? And did Shirley intend a second play upon the subject? Fast conclusions cannot be drawn, but it seems more than probable that Shirley is speaking impersonally through the character of Bornwell, who, not being a member of the "society" himself, and certain scandalous reports reaching his ears, had a right to warn his wife against a pastime which consumed not so much her purse as her fame.

From Sir Henry Herbert we learn that certain lords and ladies had been personated so naturally in *The Ball* that he felt obliged to stay the piece until certain changes had been made.³ Confined as it was to Court circles, the ball probably had its origin in the general delight in dances and masques which the French queen had done so much to foster by her personal example. Henrietta Maria had also been instrumental in introducing from France the *précieuse* doctrine. The English Court had rudely offended her by its coarseness and vulgarity, and to remedy this she had recourse to the Platonic doctrine which had for its practical end the greater refinement of social intercourse. To the majority of the fashionable folk of the time the Platonic idea probably appealed by its novelty, as a new toy to which royalty had given the

¹*English Dramatic Literature*, III, p. 107.

²*Dramatic Works*, IV, p. 9.

³Malone by Boswell, III, pp. 231-232.

stamp of its approval. Only a few really appreciated the high ideal that was back of it. The doctrine was well known as early as 1629, for Jonson has given us a picture of a right Socratic lady in his play of *The New Inn*. By 1634 the movement was well under way, as is indicated by a letter of James Howell.¹ Shirley, curiously enough, has not directly alluded to Platonic love in any of his plays on fashionable London life. There is a passage in Davenant's *Platonic Lovers*, however, in which there is a mention of the ball in connection with the new "sect":

"That's the platonic way; for so
The balls, the banquets, chariot, canopy
And quilted couch, which are the places where
This new wise sect do meditate, are kept,
Not at the lover's but the husband's charge.
And is it fit; for love makes him none,
Though she be still of the society?"²

This passage becomes doubly significant when compared with another mention of the ball by Shirley:

"Another game you have, which consumes more
Your fame than purse; your revels in the night,
Your meetings call'd the *Ball*, to which repair,
As to the court of pleasure, all your gallants,
And ladies, thither bound by a subpoena
Of Venus, and small Cupid's high displeasure;
'Tis but the Family of Love translated
Into more costly sin?"³

Further on in this passage, it is confirmed that Lord Bornwell is not a member of the society, and his complaint to his lady is his objection to this social pastime to which he is not a factor, but which is kept at his charge. Lady Bornwell is an excellent example of the *salon* type, surrounded as she was by a throng of admirers who did not glorify her in verse, to be sure, but "amused

¹*Familiar Letters*, II, p. 31.

²*Platonic Lovers*, Act III, Sc. 1.

³*Dramatic Works*, IV, p. 9.

her busy idleness with *précieux entretiens d'amour*."¹ Such devotees of fashion, as I have said above, cannot have taken the Platonic idea seriously. They were not conscious of any ideal. To them the ball offered the universal attractions of exclusiveness and novelty, and they seized upon it eagerly as something new to amuse them. Lady Frances Frampul in Jonson's *New Inn* is perhaps a more exact literary counterpart of the actual types seen in Lady Carlisle and the Duchess of Newcastle. In this same play of *The New Inn*, in the Court of Love presided over by Prudence, Lovell is sworn upon Ovid's *De Arte Amandi*.² It is interesting to find in *The Ball* that Lucina wishing to bring a book upon which the Colonel may take his oath, the latter suggests,

"Let it be *Venus* and *Adonis* then,
Or *Ovids* wanton Elegies."

But it must not be understood that Colonel Winfield is a convert to the new sect. It is to discredit his imputations that "strange words are bandied and strange revels" kept that Lady Lucina invites him to the ball. As we have seen in the play, the ball turns out to be, not a court of pleasure presided over by Cupid and Venus, as Lord Bornwell surmised, but Diana's province.

"These are none of *Venus* traine
No sparke of this Lacivious fire,
Dwells in their bosomes, no desire,
But what doth fill *Diana's* breast,
In their modest thoughts doe rest.
Venus, this new festivalle,
Shall be still *Diana's* Ball;
A chaste meeting ever here,
Seek thy votaries other where."

I do not wish to push the suggestion to the point of absurdity, or to go into too great refinements; but from the allusion in Davenant's play in which the ball is named as a place of resort of

¹See Fletcher, *Journal of Comparative Literature*, I, p. 133.

²Act III, Sc. 2.

the Platonic sect; from chance references which might indicate preciosity in the play of *The Ball* itself; and from the suggestion of the doctrine in the whole fabric of *The Lady of Pleasure*, there is good reason to believe that the so-called ball was tinged with *précieuse* sentiment, if it did not have its beginnings in the very movement itself. It is not to be concluded that Shirley is in any way satirizing the "new religion in love," and for this reason his plays are all the more important as showing the extent to which this court fashion had permeated the fashionable society of the time.

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